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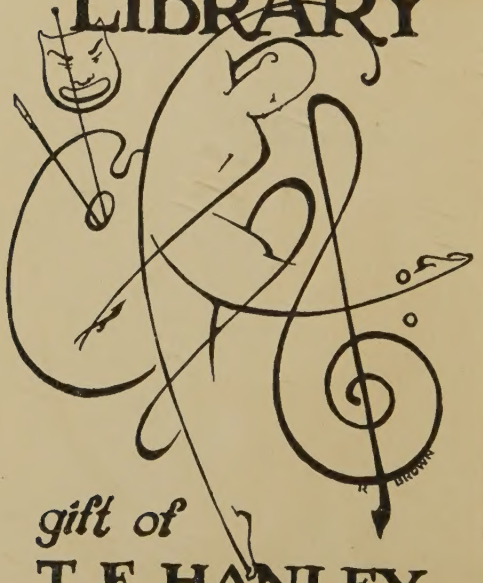

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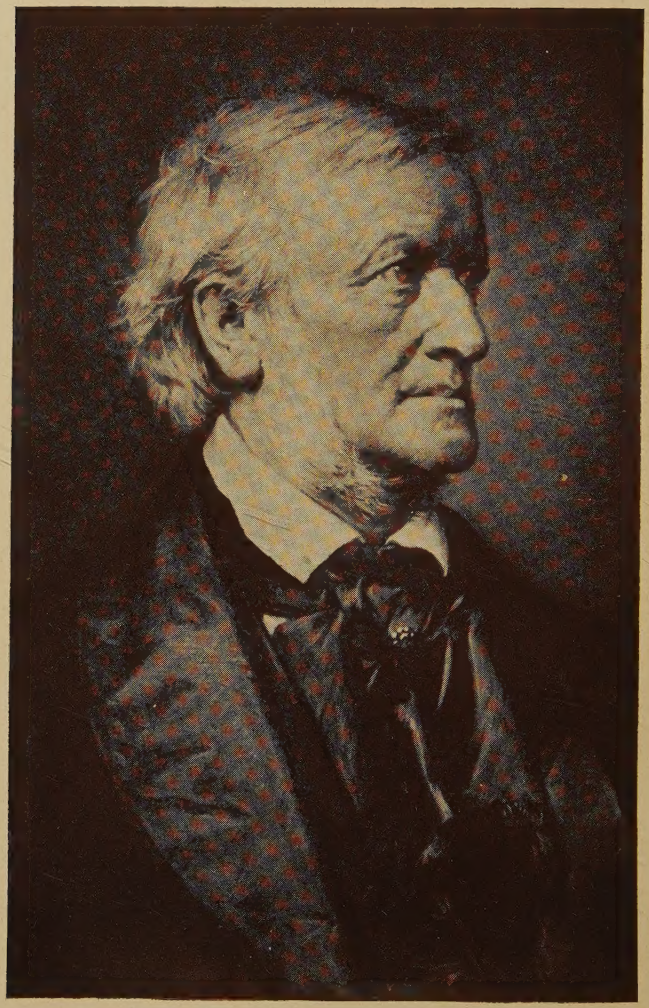

RICHARD WAGNER
1813 - 1883

RICHARD WAGNER

AS HE LIVED

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By

WILLIAM WALLACE

Author of

"THE THRESHOLD OF MUSIC", "THE MUSICAL FACULTY",
"THE CONDUCTOR AND HIS FORERUNNERS"

Publishers
HARPER & BROTHERS
New York and London
1925

RICHARD WAGNER

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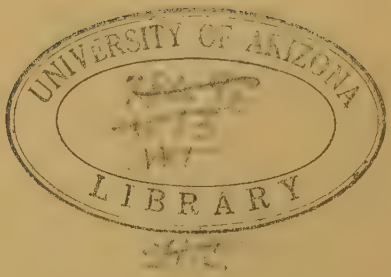

Preface

OF all the Grand Inquests in connection with Wagner there have been two that stand paramount. The first was held in the year 1883, soon after his death. Those who had known or had been in touch with him rummaged in their desks for every scrap of writing that was his, and the world of music gaped with wonder at the immensity, and often the crudity, of his thoughts.

The second Grand Inquest was held in the year 1911, upon the publication of his Autobiography, *Mein Leben,* when it was disclosed that its dictation had been begun as far back as 1869, and that a very small number of copies had been privately printed, but withheld from the public for over forty years. Upon this the documentary evidence about Wagner that had already accumulated underwent a drastic scrutiny and revision. Students of Wagner frowned, thinking of subterfuges, and his most devoted followers winced with the discovery that those mentioned in *Mein Leben,* whose versions of many an obscure affair would have been interesting if not essential, were in their graves.

The matter did not rest here. Those responsible for the publication of the Autobiography had blundered. No sheltered life was Wagner's. His private character had been stripped to the bone by Reminiscences and Letters, by a vast literature concerning things about him, great and trivial: even

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by himself. Little did his representatives foresee that it would be possible, by piecing together facts and references, to reconstruct and account for almost every day of his life, and that silent but convincing evidence was coming to light to play upon his less lovely side. Wagner himself, or those jealous of his interests, had supplied the argument if not the defense, but they had overlooked the testimony provided by this unconscionable witness. So there came to light a deadly array of what in the French law courts are called Confrontations.

In this investigation, in England at least, no searcher for historical truth has been more painstaking than Mr. Ernest Newman. In the pages that follow the references are to the first edition of his authoritative *Wagner as Man and Artist*. I was not aware of the second edition, published in America, until my text had been set up. Mr. Newman's further researches, however, have not caused me to reconsider any of my text, and I am in agreement with his conclusions on the subject of Wagner's parentage.

Another *Critical Biography* of Wagner, by George Ainslie Hight, has appeared, likewise too late for ample reference. One comment alone need be made. He accepts without inquiry Wagner's statement about his fabulous translation of the Odyssey to which I have given a little attention. His taking Wagner at his word in this may perhaps be studied in the light of the misprinted Greek quotation on the title page of his first volume, repeated on the title page of the second, and in the "nice derangement" of

accents in the Greek line on page 259 of the second volume. Wagner has not been happy in those who support his claims to scholarship, and again and again we open our eyes when Ellis speaks of Wagner's "scrupulous regard for truth."

There is no intention of covering the ground so ably tilled by Mr. Newman: that has been done once for all. Yet there are some byways still to be traced, and others are bound to be opened up when time erects its finger-posts.

For the present it has been considered sufficient to deal with Wagner as he lived, with such passing events as inform us of the adventures of the greatest composer that the world has seen.

The reader need not look for plots. As well ask at this time of day for a synopsis of *The Merchant of Venice,* but there are "stratagems and spoils," aye, "treasons" enough for this man, who, most of all, and above all surely had "music in himself."

WILLIAM WALLACE.

June 11, 1925.

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Masters of Music

Edited by SIR LANDON RONALD

WAGNER

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL BEARINGS

IT is important to review the political aspect of Germany some little time before Wagner's birth in order to appreciate the environment of his family, and the shifts and changes to which they were subject.

During this period, between 1806 and 1813, apart from physical hardships, there were mental anxieties arising from sundered allegiances and broken faiths, with Constitutions on the anvil. Saxony as a kingdom had on its throne a monarch doubly estranged from his people by two superstitions. Of these, one, of religion, was flowing not quite with the milk of human kindness and goodwill towards the *Formula Concordiæ* of the Lutherans: the other sent him headlong over to the Man of the Hour.

So great were the influence and fascination created by the atmosphere of Napoleon that men of lesser and weaker mental caliber were easily overcome and attracted to him, out of alarm for their own position, perhaps; perhaps, too, from a determination to be on what they thought was bound to be the winning side. So it happened that Saxon, Bavarian, Wurtemberger, and others speaking the German tongue but out of sympathy with the Prussian, came to terms with the invader and allowed themselves to be dragged at the tail of his chariot.

He, no doubt, had many a backward glance at them, not of gratitude, but of contempt for their

poverty of spirit. He used them so long as they served his purpose, but that tongue of his must have slid many a time into his cheek. With all his faults, Napoleon had the genius for grasping that which overrides all the artifices of war: he saw a man not alone in himself, but in the midst of his surroundings, his influences, his subterfuges. These he read as from an open book, and what he read, in its strength or weakness, was character.

Seven years before the 22nd of May, 1813, when Richard Wagner first saw the light of day, Prussia had been overrun by the French armies under Napoleon. From Jena (October 14, 1806) to Tilsit, where the Treaty of 1807 was signed, there had been disloyalty and cowardice on the part of the ennobled military caste of Frederick William III of Prussia, vanity and ignorance in his septuagenarian generals, desertion among his troops, and hatred of them by the people, who were reduced to misery as much by the stride of Napoleon's soldiers as by betrayal by their own self-appointed leaders.

If there had been a man of grit and courage to set up the guillotine in place of the Brandenburg Gate, there would have been a louder, a more just echo of the Reign of Terror. But garrison after garrison, fortress after fortress, boastful of resistance to the death, surrendered ignobly without even a timid cannon-shot.

The noise of the Conqueror appeared to have rendered men deaf to the call of duty, worst of all

those who had been intrusted with generalship, but Napoleon had two weapons which the Prussian armory lacked: he had a great road map of Germany, made by his own staff, and he had visual telegraphy by semaphore, by which a message could be delivered in half an hour, instead of in four days by courier.[1]

But against this lack of intelligence in its double sense on the part of the invaded there must be set the attitude of the invader. Reckless and restless, he stained and degraded his panoply as a man of arms by shameful and tyrannical acts, and by unchivalrous conduct towards, and ignominious insinuations about, a lady who, after all his own private episodes, was the last who should have been attacked by such a man. In these woeful times Queen Luise stood alone as a true patriot and beyond the breath of scandal.

In the confusion, with the French tongue ill understood among the innumerable Teutonic dialects, intercourse was difficult, people kept to themselves, and a certain docile attitude was the result. For if we go a little further back we find that Germany consisted of a mass of petty principalities, over two hundred in number—some said there were as many as

[1] The map was captured by the Russians in the Moscow campaign. The Prussians had only an old map of 1763. They did not adopt the semaphore system till 1832. We had ours in operation at the time of Trafalgar, and it was thanks to Napoleon's system, which of course indicated the highest visible points in the country, that we were able to plot the contours in France in our own time "when our need was the sorest."

there were days in the year [1]—and it was not till the nineteenth century was well on its way that the absorption began.

A century earlier each small state changed its ruler or came under a strange ruler with less concern than when it changed its burgomaster. State after state passed from hand to hand so frequently that the map of Germany, painted in color, had the appearance of a patchwork quilt. Uncertainty struck at every homestead. Instead of a widened outlook there was a placid stolidity, with no anxiety or care about matters that lay beyond the doorstep. It was this introversion of thought that created out of a diversity of principalities a submission to law, an acquiescence in forms of government which the people were powerless to resist. At the same time the mind, accepting worldly conditions beyond its control, sought refuge in those abstractions upon which the great Teutonic philosophy was built. This attitude of aloofness bred indifference towards matters outside personal welfare, but with all the risks that attend such lack of concern or of public spirit. There was no scope for individuality when continuity of government in a principality was capricious, and when the honest burgher was ordered to welcome, every few years, a change of ruler out of touch with the habits, traditions, and ancient customs of those over whom he was set.

[1] After 1815 there were thirty-nine separate states. Liszt wrote to Wagner, in reply to a request for royal influence, "I can manage one king, but how about the other thirty-eight?"

Anything in the way of enterprise or disinterested service was looked upon with ill-favor, if not with forbidding injunctions. The fear of another Reign of Terror, of any independent action or suggestion, had reduced the citizen to a state which was not one of discipline so much as of servility and stupidity.

The Treaty of Tilsit gave Napoleon more than half the territory of Prussia, or rather he took it, with the connivance of Tsar Alexander. It was secretly drafted, secretly signed. The war indemnity of forty millions sterling was far beyond the Prussian purse: to demand it was a mastermove, for it furnished Napoleon with the excuse to garrison the Prussian fortresses with his troops.[1] But what he was unable to obtain in cash he made up in kind, for works of art by hundreds were packed up and sent to Paris.

The bewildered populace did not know which way to turn. Bad traditions had reduced the army to a tattered rag: the court intrigued behind a king who was prepared to bargain with friend and foe alike, so long as he could keep his throne, and it was only when incompetence, treachery, and cowardice had been exposed that room was made for those who set their faces to rescue their country from the mire of hunger and poverty and of shame into which it had fallen.

[1] In his *German Struggle for Liberty:* Harper, 1896, Poultney Bigelow says (vol. i, p. 144, *n.*), "We have been assured on good authority that more than one town in Prussia is still (1896) paying interest on moneys raised under compulsion during the Napoleonic occupation."

Napoleon's secret service was being hoodwinked, for gradually a citizen army was coming into existence, organized and drilled, which five years later was to speed that unwelcome guest downwards in his career.

Experience arrived from an unexpected source. The American War of Independence had taught the Hessian mercenaries on the British side something of campaigning and it is strange to read that Scharnhorst, the Hanoverian, who had in hand the task of reorganizing the national defenses, had to obtain the permission of King George III to leave his service and place himself under the orders of the Prussian King. It is equally strange to learn that at one time he was offered a high military post in England, for Hanover, in spite of many moves on the map, was still British.

What Frederick William said with his lips he revoked with his pen: Napoleon spake, and he obeyed. Prussia was humiliated and became the conquered province of the Corsican. There was not much to choose between them: the double-dealing of the one, haggling without a shred of dignity in his lost kingdom; the other adding to his score of tactlessness and brutality—the great commander turned bully; between them the Tsar, pledged to each, bound to neither.

But Napoleon had become something more than a conqueror or a dictator: worse than either he had become a superstition, for it was only blind acquiescence in superstition that could explain why lesser

kings and princelings in the German principalities should have gone rabbit-shooting at Jena on Napoleon's invitation, after a very different battue two years before, in which he had hunted them in disorder off that very land which once had been theirs. Their memories were short, their consciences too facile; patriotism had become bad form and Germany was in pawn.

But there were some whose souls were not dead, and though their efforts were doomed to fail, they stood up to the usual firing party like heroes, often without the apology of a make-believe trial.

The evacuation of Berlin by the French, temporary as it was to prove, gave the Prussians time to think, and the first move towards reform lulled the people into some belief that their voice was to be heard in government. It was a beginning, and each of the sixty-four members of the new Assembly was in a sense an emissary of the newborn popular strength. But they did not know that their king had sold the pass and that their army was to serve with the Napoleonic colors. It was heartbreaking to those who were looking to the day when they should see the back of the last French soldier.

But Napoleon was marching on Moscow, with the Prussian King as vassal, with a Prussian army in being, brigaded with his own, and commanders sickened with the knowledge that they had been seconded to the archenemy.

The wastes that he had to cover and the resistance that he had to encounter were not what Napoleon

had expected. The Russian was not to be cowed into an apathetic surrender at the word of command. Moscow was to be the outpost, not to India, as Napoleon thought, but to Saint Helena.

Then the first prop of his world-dominion flared up like tinder, and then the snow came, and hunger with the snow.

Owing to the pledges given by the Prussian King to Napoleon, his generals were in a confused state of mind as to what cause they were serving. Frederick William had promised Napoleon an army for the Moscow campaign, but the remnants of the French army, scattered over the inhospitable marches of East Prussia, were threatened by a Russian army almost intact, and by a Prussian general prepared to resist both. Rebellions, treason, arrests, courts-martial were on every lip, till some bold spirits resolved to save the king from himself. It was not, however, the councilors or courtiers or generals who brought matters to a head, but free-lances aided by poets and professors who sang or preached deliverance.

Prussia was overrun by French and Russians, but silent forces were at work, and Germany mobilized.

The first blood in the War of Liberation was shed at Lützen, a small village southwest of Leipzig, when the Prussian and Russian forces, 70,000 strong, met Napoleon's army of nearly 120,000. The engagement was undecisive, but it was the prelude. It was May 2, 1813.

Twenty days later, Richard Wagner was born.

CHAPTER TWO: EARLY DAYS

I. RICHARD WAGNER IN BOYHOOD

WHILE the polyglot remnants of the combatants at Lützen were pouring into Leipzig along with the wounded, it is hardly likely that Police-Actuary Friedrich Wagner (born June 18, 1770, just six months before Beethoven's birth) had much time to think of the approaching lying-in of his wife, Johanna Rosina (born September 19, 1778), occupied as he was with his official duties at the Leipzig Town-Court. After all, it was not a first-born that was due. She had already presented her husband with eight, and was now in her thirty-fifth year, a little tired and worn with her maternal anxieties and responsibilities.

With the town seething with soldiers and camp-followers clamoring for billets, and the householders in groups feverishly discussing the action of the Kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Wurtemberg who had thrown in their lot with Napoleon, Friedrich Wagner must have had his hands full in interpreting in his fashion for the French soldiers who sought his help. And when, on May 21-22, 1813, he hurried from his desk to his home on the Brühl, to learn how it fared with his wife, little did he dream that this newcomer in later years was to be as another Napoleon in his own sphere, and to divide the musical world into two hostile camps, but, unlike Napoleon, to find his cause

triumphant and establish a national form of Art. But he did not live to hear more than an infant's cry from the lips of the child as the guns of the Allies thundered round Leipzig, and he died when Richard had just reached the age of six months—on November 22, 1813.

Into the Wagner household had come Ludwig Geyer (born January 21, 1780), a personality of much attraction, whose talent as actor, dramatist, and above all as portrait painter, must have had no small influence in determining the careers of the various members of the family.

Nine months after the death of her husband the Widow Johanna married Geyer (August 14 or 28, 1814). The only child of this marriage was Cæcilie, who arrived six months later (February 26, 1815).[1] There must have been something very attractive in the Wagner family for a man of thirty-four to have married the widow of thirty-six, and adopted the seven surviving children, whose ages ranged from twelve months to fifteen years.

Of near relatives on the Wagner side, the only one was Friedrich's younger brother, and Richard's uncle, Adolf, a man of some erudition, for he had held his own in letters and philology: he had written much and, what is more, especially in times that were hard, had seen himself in print. He does not appear, however, to have taken any early part in the education of his nephews and nieces.

[1] The paternity of Richard is discussed in Appendix B.

Geyer was of another mold. He had imagination; he had a hand that interpreted what he saw, and from all accounts he must have stood high among the portrait painters of his day, with commissions entered months ahead, some of them from Royalty. He must have been a very Molière, light-stepping before his canvas, with the repartees of his next comedy running in his head; darting off to rehearsal with the child Richard holding his hand, grumbling at the stupidity of some novice in the company, but comforted by the presence of the little boy, who, frightened by the darkness of the theater, clung to his coat-tails.

The child's amazing stepfather on the empty stage may have acted in pantomime the fairy tale which he had invented the night before, just as Richard was dropping off to sleep. If all the facts were disclosed we might discover that Richard, with his highly excitable and impressionable mind owed not a little to what he could remember of Geyer. He could not have forgotten everything about him, and had Geyer lived beyond September 30, 1821, he might have brought up a very different kind of child, a great composer surely, but kept within bounds by the wise and lovable man looking over his shoulder.

Richard's early days, entered with the surname of Geyer and not Wagner at the Kreuzschule of Dresden, are chronicled with that worship of trivialities which every public man has to suffer at the hands of the imaginative and undiscriminating biographer, abroad for any material that can be had. These

need not occupy us: the babble of the nursery, of the street, of the common living room, may be put on one side.

But when the boy entered the Kreuzschule, at the close of 1822, being then in his tenth year, there are archives which record his progress. It is a singular fact that emphasis has been laid upon his preference for Shakespeare and Homer, authors in what were to him alien tongues, which it would be very difficult even for a gifted German schoolboy to understand. Perhaps his over-zealous biographers wished to place him in the light as a kind of Siegfried of ten, mastering foreign languages as easily as that hero understood the bird-song.

And here we may interpolate, by way of Interlude, a little critical examination.

2. AN HOMERIC—AND WAGNERIAN—MYTH

If Wagner is to be credited, a special meaning should be attached to that μνήμη μουσομήτωρ of his, that Memory, Mother of the Muses. Its defects have been pointed out many a time, but there is a statement of his own, quoted by Glasenapp[1] which does not seem to have been investigated at all, probably because those who have accepted it have not had much, if any, acquaintance with the classical author concerned.

[1] *Life of Richard Wagner:* authorized English version by Wm. Ashton Ellis of C. F. Glasenapp's *Das Leben Richard Wagners,* London, 1900, vol. i, p. 93. Compare with this Glasenapp's *Fourth German Edition,* Leipzig, 1905, vol. i, p. 103.

Ellis is translating from an earlier edition of Glasenapp, and the following is his rendering:

"Since Easter, 1826, just thirteen years of age he [Wagner] had entered the Third Class of his gymnasium; 'in the third class I translated the first twelve Books [Bücher] of the Odyssey,' he tells us, and the Archives of the Kreuzschule confirm the tale."

They do not; they merely "inform us of his diligence," a very different affair.

Ellis continues: "Lists of works read by the various pupils appear to have been regularly entered up at that time; among those of Michaelmas, 1826, we find under the heading, 'Extra private studies' of the Third Class, 2nd div., a record of Richard's Homer-reading and his written translation of the first three books [Gesänge] of the Odyssey,—a supplemental note, 'Achilleus' Siegenfreude, Blum.' would seem to refer to some Blumenles, or 'golden treasury' of Greek poetry then in fashion."

Glasenapp's words are: "'Blum,' bezieht sich wahrscheinlich auf einen so betitelten Abschnitt aus einer Blumenlese griechischer Dichtungen." There is not a word about the book being "in fashion."

Ellis proceeds: "This brief specification does not acquire its true significance, however, until we compare it with what his schoolfellows achieved at the same time: only *two* of them ventured on Homer at all, and one of them had confined himself to *one* book of the Odyssey, the other to 200 verses of the Iliad.... At Michaelmas we find him transferred to the Upper Third."

In one of the most recent books on Wagner[1] we find this:

"Au rebours de sa première éducation musicale, découssue et hazardeuse, son éducation scolaire est correctement classique. . . . N'a-t-il traduit, en troisième [classe] jusqu'à douze chants de l'Odyssée?" Fourcaud, too, a Member of the Institut, follows the others without troubling to examine the matter.

Let us analyze these statements. At the age of thirteen Wagner entered the Third Class at Easter, 1826, which in that year fell about the last week in March. At Michaelmas, September 29, he was promoted to the Upper Third. Between these dates there are twenty-seven weeks, in which "Wagner himself tells us" that he translated the first twelve books of the Odyssey, 6,210 lines in all. Glasenapp is quoting from the "Autobiographical Sketch," *Prose Works, English Edition,* Vol. I, p. 4. He refers us to the Archives, without, however, stating what there is therein to "confirm the tale," to quote the perversion by Ellis of the German text, which, as has just been pointed out, merely "informs us of his diligence." On the other hand we are supplied with a quotation from the Archives concerning the lesser and more comprehensible translation, which quotation

[1] Louis de Fourcaud: *Richard Wagner, les Étapes de sa Vie,* etc. Paris, Hachette, 1923, p. 16. "Opposed to the beginning of his musical education, scrappy and haphazard, his school education is correctly classic. . . . Did he not translate in the third class twelve books of the Odyssey?"

is of the utmost value in analyzing Wagner's position in the case of the twelve books, and also in testing his veracity.

In both editions of *Grove* it is stated that the translation of the twelve books was done out of school hours. In order to carry out this immense task Wagner must have translated between thirty-five and forty lines every day, including Sundays. Where is that translation?

He must have been equipped with an inexhaustible acquaintance with the Homeric vocabulary, a profound knowledge of the Attic dialect, of Homeric forms, construction, and syntax.[1]

A boy of thirteen, who, without a hint of early training in Greek, could in a few weeks master the special idiom of Homer and translate over 6,000 lines of a form of Greek to which his preliminary studies could not have afforded help, had claims to be regarded as one of the most profound scholars of all time.

But of Wagner's education in Greek there is no record on his part. This oversight of his is significant in view of his parading other details of his life, somewhat more intimate in character.

Knowing our Wagner as we do, he was not the one to hide his accomplishments under a bushel. We

[1] The extent and magnitude of these, apart from actual knowledge, can be gathered from a glance at R. J. Cunliffe's quarto, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect,* 400 pages of double columns, London, 1924. In the Preface, p. viii, he says, "This knowledge [of the Homeric language] is not to be acquired without hard, possibly repulsive, work with grammar and dictionary."

should have expected to have heard, in later years, of his reading his colossal translation to his long-suffering friends, of his having held converse with the leading philologists of the day, no doubt setting them right on many an obscure point, of his having done everything to magnify his claims to scholarship; but of these none is on record.

Apart from his dissertations about Greek art and literature, there is not a syllable, beyond the bare statement quoted, about an achievement which, for a schoolboy of thirteen, must have been worth talking about . . . if indeed it had been accomplished.

We gain some light from the use of the word "Blum," which is not correctly translated in the English edition. It should run "Achilleus' Siegesfreude probably refers to some extract (Abschnitt) with that heading, taken from a *Blumenlese* of Greek poetry." The *Blumenlese* was a selection of passages for the use of schools, like *Camenarum Flosculi,* or an *Anthology,* all of which titles contain the idea of *flowers.* In Thackeray's *Anthologia Græca* (reprint of 1902) the selected passages from the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* are not all of the same length; they vary from a dozen to nearly 100 lines. It would be easy, were it worth while, to choose extracts from the first three books of either, equal in length to any 200 lines of the *Iliad.*

Let us make a comparison. In the first seven books of *Paradise Lost* there are 6,069 lines. Let anyone glance at the amount of material in these seven books, and ask himself if he would undertake

to copy by hand, which would not demand the mental effort of translation, these 6,069 lines in twenty-six weeks.

The references to Greek in *My Life* (English text) are scanty. In the description of that wonderful library of his (p. 316) he says, " As for the Greek and Roman classics, I had to content myself with standard German translations. Indeed, on looking once more into my Homer, whom I secured in the original Greek, I soon recognized that I should be presuming on more leisure than my conductorship was likely to leave me, if I hoped to find time for regaining my lost knowledge of that language."

But if he had known it as fluently as he alleged, he would never have forgotten it, and surely it would not have made inroads upon his leisure any more than the " most voluminous works " with which he equipped himself " for a study of universal history."

In *My Life,* whenever he has to speak of Greek, he does not give any clue to the extent of his knowledge; " the grammar of the language seemed to me merely a tiresome obstacle." This from the man who said that he had translated the first twelve books of the *Odyssey*!!! Did he imagine that he could be baptized with the blood of some mysterious dragon which would enable him to know all tongues without needing to look at a grammar?

The allusions to the work of his schoolfellows are evidently dragged in to enhance the prestige of the hero. The Archives bear witness to what they did,

and there was nothing unusual about their studies. But they are silent about those twelve books.

In later years, when writing on June 12, 1872, to his "Esteemed Friend," Friedrich Nietzsche,[1] he speaks of having felt "drawn to the study of the Greek language itself with a power that made me almost unruly in my shirking of the Latin." He goes on to complain that his later teachers in Leipzig "entirely rooted out these tastes and likings," but in this letter, with all its vague references to classical scholarship, there is not a word about that translation of his when he was thirteen. It was safer, perhaps, to say nothing about it when writing to a Professor of Classical Philology, as Nietzsche then was, or else awkward questions might have arisen.

It has been necessary to deal with the statement of Wagner at length, because it has been accepted by one biographer after another, without any attempt to verify it.[2]

3. THE CALL

Richard's removal from Dresden to Leipzig at the end of the year 1827 brought him, as we have seen, under the eye of Uncle Adolf, and we have been told of his resentment at being placed in a lower class at the Nicolai-Gymnasium than the one he had been in at the Kreuzschule. We do not know, however, if the standards of education corresponded, class

[1] *Prose Works*, English edition, vol. v, p. 292.

[2] A further reference to Wagner as a "Classical Scholar" will be found in Appendix A.

for class. In any case we do not hear much about further studies; perhaps Adolf, in touch with the learned men and poets of the day, was too much occupied with his own affairs to have time for his nephew's school work, and was content to have him near at hand picking up such general knowledge as a lad can acquire when in the company of men four or five times older than himself. This kind of "education," while very well in itself, would have been the wiser had some element of discipline been present. But Adolf, self-centered as he must have been to produce the enormous amount of work attributed to him, was possibly the best example to the lad, who felt that he too would create great works, if only he could discover what form they should take.

The awakening came on his hearing a Beethoven Symphony at the Gewandhaus concerts. That was his "moment": he was to wait nearly fifty years for his "hour" to strike.

The impression which music made upon him, the well-nigh physical wrench that it made upon his being, determined his fate. It is more than likely that what he early heard was a conglomeration of false notes from instruments badly played, so preying upon his ear that their recollection sent him speedily to bed, to wake up, next morning, with discords in his mind, and the resolve to discover the potion that, as he has told us, made him violently sick.

What these Gewandhaus performances were like we can gather from the criticisms of concerts in Beethoven's day. Indifferent rehearsals, fiascos,

quarrelings must have been frequent. At the first performance of *The Ninth* in Leipzig the conductor had not a copy of the full score, but only the first violin part. Wagner himself has described a performance of the same symphony at which the conductor, Polenz, when he started to conduct the first movement, was ordered by the double-bass to sit down, and did not resume the beat till the choral part.

Could it be, then, that the reaction which has been referred to was produced by a shockingly bad performance (on the presumption, of course, that it was the music and nothing else that had the disturbing effect), or was this an early indication of Wagner's susceptibility to physical stimuli which utimately found so large expression in his music? Further, could it be that out of the chaos which he heard—a chaos which in later days impelled him to render unto Beethoven the things that were Beethoven's plus his own—his sensitive ear discerned solutions, resolving in musical language the irresolution of the technically poor instrumentalists, and engendering in his mind a fresh mode of musical thought?

A century ago the material condition of a musician in Leipzig could not have been greatly different from that of a musician anywhere else in western Europe. Bach, three-quarters of a century before, had fought his Councils in many a drawn battle, only to be forgotten. The musician whose vocation was determined entirely by musical ability was rare. Organists there were and performers in the violin family; their instruments were at hand; but in the household and

the " domestic circle " there was little else than the square piano of the Zumpe model, then barely sixty years old, with here and there experiments to improve its action.

Local orchestras were still being recruited, as in Haydn's and Mozart's time, from people of very diverse occupations, who practiced their instruments in their spare moments. So it is no sweeping assumption to conjecture that in the Gewandhaus orchestra there were members whose time was not fully occupied with music. This would account for the ragged performances of which descriptions have come down to us.

But excluding his music, we find that Wagner, in his youth and indeed throughout his life, manifested the characteristics associated with an only son. Does not this throw some light on his parentage? He was petulant and wayward when crossed; indifferent to public opinion in one sense, hungry for praise in another, he went his own way, conscious that in the end he would prevail. No musician, no moralist even, will deny him that integrity and belief in himself, that appeal for a verdict which by his consistency and loyalty to music he wrung at last from a frowning jury in whose box all the world sat. This aspect will call for discussion at a later stage: it is worthy of note here, at the unfolding of his mind.

Apart from music, the artistic movements in the 'twenties of the nineteenth century do not appear to have affected Wagner's trend of thought. Of Goethe there is a trace in the *Faust* Overture; of Schiller,

the intimate friend of Uncle Adolf, there would appear to be none. He does not tell us whether he was conscious of the works of three poets which in France at least were destined to evoke musical treatment. Could it be that he was so detached as to be unaffected by the prevailing currency of thought? Or was his mind drifting into those channels of legend which ultimately were to bring him to haven in *The Ring?*

It is a coincidence that the three poets were of Scottish origin. In 1760 there was published what purported to be a translation of certain poems of Ossian, a nebulous Celt, and the translator was James Macpherson. They were not translations but were assigned by tradition to a poet who, if ever he existed, very likely could neither read nor write. If not actual forgeries, they were "passed off" as genuine, and the mystery is why Macpherson did not acknowledge sole authorship, for there was nothing in them to be ashamed of. On these poems was based the text of Le Sueur's opera, *Ossian, or the Minstrels,* given for the first time in 1804, and greeted with extravagant praise. The effect of this success was to induce Méhul to write an opera on a similar subject, called *Uthal.* But the French audiences were not appreciative.

The next poet was Walter Scott, whose first novel, *Waverley,* came out in 1814, but he had begun to publish poems in 1805.

Byron was the third, with his mother from Aber-

deen. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* were published in 1812, and Byronism arrived.

If Wagner ever heard of these authors, it is singular that he should have resisted their influence throughout his career, especially if their immense popularity on the Continent is taken into account. If we are to believe him, he pinned his faith to Greek literature and Shakespeare. But had it not been for the musical successes of others we may ask what direction he would have taken. As we know him in *Tristan,* the *Meistersinger* and *The Ring,* it is by no means easy to look into his mind and accept these as the combined assimilations of Homer, Sophocles, Shakespeare; of Gluck, Beethoven, Weber, Meyerbeer; in themselves constellations too remote in æons of space and thought ever to come within the orbit of the rings of the Saturn whom we are discussing.

Gluck's music uplifted the sense of the text, just as Meyerbeer derided it to the extent that he flung all prosody to the winds, lacking as he did that exquisite fitness of sense for expression which would have led him, with his Berlin accent, to crave help and advice from a French man of letters. Scribe, his librettist, had to put up with much.

It was scarcely to be expected that a boy in his fifteenth year should show any assured bent towards creative work. His dramatic excursions do not appear to have reached their journey's end. But it was natural that Wagner, with sisters on the stage, should have been fascinated by their vocation, and if the gods had blessed him with more inches, there

might not have been a Tristan, but a passable Hamlet or Romeo. Histrionic ability and self-expression by facial play were to be put to the test in later days.

The decision to follow a musical career brought about a crisis in the family. There was no indication, beyond the reaction which anyone in an audience might have experienced, that he had special musical ability; his instrumental technique was limited. But with opportunities for hearing music and for frequenting the theaters, possibly with " passes " obtained for him by his sisters, there became rooted in his marrow an instinct that music was as it were his mother tongue. The mystery lay in his transferring to paper, not incorrectly, and in a form of notation which to most people seems as inscrutable as hieroglyphics, the sounds which he heard with the inner ear of the mind. This, too, before he had entered upon any technical—and in his case desultory—course of instruction.

He had, in fact, a mind strongly predisposed to music, a mind much more perplexing and complicated to analyze than that of a poet, whose medium for expression is the tongue of every-day speech, and whose " notation " is that by which he reads and writes. For apart from the workings of the imagination, namely, the primary creative act, there is the exacting process of recording sound by signs, as definite in their meaning as words in print, and determined by the limitations of harmony and the instruments for which they are written.

It cannot be said that Wagner in his youth was

starved musically. There were ample feasts in Leipzig both of opera and of instrumental music which provided as much variety as he could digest. So there was nothing surprising in the surfeits in which he indulged, assuredly a somewhat mixed diet, but always directed towards the building up of that frame which ultimately was to put forth all its strength —in music.

4. THE STUDENT

Outside Leipzig and beyond the frontiers of the German states events were happening which were destined to have far-reaching effects. The business of the barricades in Paris in July, 1830, local and domestic though the affair seemed to be, involving merely the abdication of one king of France and the proclamation of his successor, had in the background something more than an uprising against authority. What Paris might do within her own fortifications might be repeated elsewhere, and as all eyes were directed towards a city in tumult, the idea spread of making a bid for liberty.

Belgium rose against Dutch rule; Poland broke out against Russia; the Central States of Italy were claiming independence; and Great Britain was torn by the struggle for parliamentary reform, to be secured two years later.

The grave happenings in France aroused the interest and sympathy of Wagner, then about to enter the University of Leipzig as a student. It was not

his nature to hold himself aloof from national crises, although they were not the concern either of his state or of music. At a stroke he became a Revolutionary, to use his own words.

But a month before the French Revolution, the tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession was celebrated at Dresden. These occurrences had awakened the Saxon mind to proclaim its dissatisfaction alike with a complacent king and his fanatical minister, although they professed antagonistic religions. The state was clamoring for reform and progress and these followed in September. But before reform had taken shape, a lesser outbreak occurred in the same month in Leipzig, parochial rather than national, and with its sordid side. An attempt to show a shade of sympathy with France was made by a display of the French flag. In this émeute Wagner's part was to write an overture on a political theme, and before he matriculated, on February 23rd, 1831, he had taken to composing grand overtures.

His aim was to take a course of philosophy and æsthetics, but it is more than probable that he aspired to associate himself with a Students' Corps. At all events he knew so little about the etiquette strictly maintained in the clubs, or so far forgot himself, as to outrage the self-importance of the president of the Corps.

Then ensued, according to his own account, a period in which beer and song were the poor substitutes for the courses. His dueling experiences

(*My Life,* p. 58), if they are to be believed, were confined to a series of challenges, which, however, were abortive, for his adversaries either were wounded in some earlier affair or had fled on account of debt.

The duels appear to have been serious and fought with rapiers, for one student, whom he was to have encountered later, was run through the arm, and another was mortally wounded. So our truculent and bloodthirsty Bobadil lived, but not to fight another day; when fighting came, he ran away. This dueling in grim earnest was before face-slashing became the vogue, surely the silliest form of mutilation that even the Teuton mind could conceive.

Then Theodor Weinlig came on the scene, at that time a man of about fifty years of age. He seems to have been one of those rare beings, gifted with insight into his pupils' limitations, allowing them to feel that they were developing, while guiding them all unconscious of the restraint that held them to the stricter groundwork of musical study.

Before Weinlig took him in hand he had already made an excursion into orchestral music with his Concert Overture in B flat. He showed it to Dorn, the conductor at the Court Theatre, who decided to perform it. This was in December, 1830. When the rehearsal began there was a mutiny in the orchestra: the players resented being asked to execute music the like of which they had never seen, but they got through it somehow. In the evening it was greeted

by the audience with shouts of derisive laughter. First blood, no doubt, though it did not leave Wagner raw.

We do not know what Weinlig thought of it, but Richard's studies with him, compressed within the short period of six months, were to woo him from his adoration of Beethoven and incline his ear to Mozart. He may have been discouraged from writing for the orchestra, for his earliest works were for the piano, a sonata, a polonaise duet and a fantasia.

He was more fortunate than most composers of his years in obtaining performances, for his two Concert Overtures in D minor and in C were performed at the end of 1831 by a semi-professional society, the Euterpe. In 1832 the Concert Overture in D minor was given in February at the Gewandhaus, his Overture to *König Enzio,* a popular tragedy of the day, was performed in the Leipzig Theatre during March, and the Concert Overture in C at the Gewandhaus in April—not a beggarly record for a nineteen-year-old lad, for the most part self-taught.

After a brief stay in Vienna he went on to Prague. Here his Symphony was rehearsed by the Conservatorium orchestra under Dionys Weber. Important as it was to hear his own music, it was still more important to listen to Weber's account of Mozart's conducting his own works, and to Tomaschek's reminiscences of Beethoven.

The Symphony obtained two performances in Leipzig, in December, 1832, and January, 1833. In the second concert Clara Wieck played a piano concerto

by Pixis. The contemporary criticisms suggested Beethoven as a model, and on the whole were extremely favorable, but it is difficult to understand why one newspaper, while praising the work, should have added, "Its inventive contents are nothing less than insignificant." There is no mistake here. Glasenapp (*Fourth German Edition,* Vol. I, p. 179 *n.*) gives the words, "der Gehalt der Erfindung ist nichts weniger als gering." But another criticism is more kindly—"Jungfräuliche Naivit ät in der Empfängnis der Grundmotive," (naïve girlishness in the conception of the thematic material).

During his stay in Prague Wagner outlined the idea of an opera, *Die Hochzeit,* but the music was not composed beyond the first scene. In this year also (1832) he composed seven pieces to Goethe's *Faust.* They were published eighty-two years later.

In January, 1833, he set out for Würzburg to conduct one of his Overtures at a concert given by a local musical society. It is probable that the invitation came through his brother Albert, who held an appointment at the opera there. The post of chorus master happened to be vacant and Richard obtained it. The season lasted only three months, but during that time he was able to gain experience in conducting and "production," with all the undercurrents and makeshifts of operatic life. At the close of the season his brother went off on tour and Richard was left to himself. *Die Hochzeit* was finally abandoned, and he turned to *Die Feen.* To describe the plot is

not necessary, but allusion may be made to its chief contents as showing the direction of Wagner's mind. It was more like an old-fashioned pantomime than an opera. There were mortals and fairies, semi-fairies and magicians, oaths and secrets, disguises and treasons, a gulf of fire—was Wagner a pyromaniac in theory?—subterranean chasms, a transformation into stone, and a happy ending. Much of this was derived from tales by Gozzi, at the suggestion of E. T. A. Hoffmann, that fantastic poet-musician-lawyer, of whom Wagner was a worshiper.

Brother Albert's opinion of the voice parts was not encouraging, but Richard went on and finished the opera on New Year's day, 1834. Before this, however, there was an interlude. Albert was acting in Marschner's *Vampyr,* but was dissatisfied with the ineffective ending of an aria which he had to sing. So Richard turned to and added to it with his own words and music. We are not informed what Marschner, then about forty years of age and court Capellmeister at Hanover, thought of it. Later on Wagner was to "touch up" Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis* in similar fashion.

Wagner was now back in Leipzig, endeavoring to place *Die Feen.* The score passed from hand to hand and was shelved. It obtained its first performance in 1888, five years after the composer's death. But the end was not altogether barren, for it caused him to break out in an article on German opera. In this he complained that German music

was too cold and intellectual, it was dry and pedantic, there was, in fact, no German opera, and new forms must be invented to meet the spirit of the age.

But this was written after he had been swept off his feet by hearing Madame Schröder-Devrient as Romeo in Bellini's opera *I Capuletti ed i Montecchi.* Besides, he was being strongly influenced by a movement in art and literature which was to banish to the desert all that had outlived the needs of men.

So in his enthusiasm for Italian music and his contempt for German dogmatism he flew to the extreme of writing a poem in which southern licentiousness was exalted at the expense of German Puritanism—a version, or rather perversion, of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure,* and he called it *Das Liebesverbot,* or *Forbidden Love.* Was there not a trace of the Beckmesserish mood in making Angelo a German Friedrich, in contrast with the lightsome Sicilians among whom the scene was laid?

Why did Wagner found his text upon this play? Was it his object to make the Puritan prig Angelo-Friedrich ridiculous in some ponderous fashion, and, by making him a German, poke fun at the Teutonic attitude towards the basic idea of the plot? One notable fact emerges: there could not have been a greater contrast than that between *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot,* with only fifteen months between the completion of each.

If we were to scrutinize every moment of Wagner's life—and in all conscience he supplied material in abundance—we should still ask for evidence on many

a point. There are links in the chain, which, judging by the condition of their neighboring links, could not have been so thin and worn that they had to be removed. But perhaps it was owing to their very weakness that they were cut out and discarded. Therefore we are impelled to ask, What had become of those courses of philosophy and æsthetics in the University of Leipzig?

CHAPTER THREE: ON THE ROAD

I. "LOVE FORBIDDEN"

IN the summer of 1834 Wagner found himself in a unique position. In those days there were no press agents, no interviews, no concert-managers, no photographers. The success of a young man just turned twenty-one in some city of Germany did not flutter the musical world and stir up a host of hangers-on, greedy to exploit him and claim a large share of the proceeds. If the hands of Time's clock had been put forward seventy years it is difficult to say if we should ever have had *Tristan, The Ring,* and *Parsifal.* Ever living from hand to mouth, would he, at his age, have resisted the temptation of being turned into a "star"? His mind was well set upon music, with flashes from that restless pen of his, but it was not yet music of which he was to be the apostle.

Musical ability about the year 1834 must have been somewhat adrift if the only person to be found competent to undertake the duties of musical conductor of the Opera at Magdeburg was a lad just out of his teens. To talk as Glasenapp did (in W. A. Ellis's *Edition,* Vol. I, p. 185) of Richard's "sacrificing" his artistic freedom by accepting the appointment, was to show a curious lack of the sense of proportion. Glasenapp must have been thinking, not of the immature youth, but of the Wagner of *Tristan,* when he had found himself. At twenty-one

it is rash to predict how any lad will shape. There was nothing in Richard's compositions to show that he was doing anything else than continuing on the lines of Beethoven. It was remarkable enough that he was accomplishing even this, but at this time he had no freedom, artistic or domestic, to sacrifice. At his age he had gained as a composer more recognition than a sculptor, painter or poet, twice and more than twice his age, and equal to him in talent, would have been able to obtain.

It is not a little misleading for Wagner's biographers to describe him as seen through presbyopic spectacles—not the youth as he was but as the man that he was to become.

The step to Magdeburg was but a step upwards in his career: he moved into a higher class, into which many a man of riper years would have been glad to have entered. How he secured it we know not, but there it was, and for him a critical event. We are equally in the dark as to his reason for accepting an engagement from an impresario whose reputation for financial integrity appears to have been slender. But perhaps others eligible for the post knew their man too well to give it a thought.

But if the pay was uncertain, the experience would have been invaluable had Wagner been endowed with the flair for seizing upon the essentials for drama, and alert to notice what situations, climaxes, contrasts of light and shade, quickened the pulse of the audience or palled upon them. We are told that he was punctilious in detail not only as a conductor but as

a stage-manager also. No composer of his years, attached to the stage by the strongest of ties, intensely interested in what may without offence be called the mechanics of dramatic art, enjoyed such an opportunity for observation, for noting effective or dull moments. If it was against the grain to work up the répertoire of fashionable French operas, he did not say so. He seems on the contrary to have taken delight in his post and to have been popular with all. But the works of his greatest period show, that with the exception of *Die Meistersinger,* he retained nothing whatsoever of stage technique. He learnt nothing. The apathy of the Magdeburgers, of which he complained, may have had its root in himself, and in the notoriety of his manager.

In the company there was a certain Wilhelmine Planer, the "juvenile lead," to be known later as "Minna" alike by those who blamed her or praised her for the dominating part which she played in Wagner's life. From the psychological point of view, in some respects as important as Wagner himself, she will claim our attention at a later stage.

In the 'thirties of the last century there were circumstances very different from those of the present day, when much be-photographed leading ladies pontificate, like the mythical Jeanne of the ninth century, in guild, chapel, reunion and conference. A stock company had to "huddle," to use Henley's expressive word in his *Ballade of Dead Actors.* We have a description by E. T. A. Hoffmann, not so many years before of his company "on the road." It is given

in a note in Ellis's *Glasenapp,* Vol. I, p. 50. (*German text,* 4th ed., I, p. 54.)

"We took our departure in nine vanloads.... In particular a Hamburg charabanc, containing the lower staff, offered such a spectacle that I never failed to be present at its loading and unloading. On a careful computation it held the following: a stage hairdresser, two scene-shifters, five maids; nine children, of whom two newly born and three still sucking; a parrot that swore unceasingly and to the point; five dogs, among them three decrepit pugs; four guinea-pigs, and a squirrel."

Wretched lodgings, parlous transport, with a "misery junction" at every cross-road, appalling sanitary conditions in the theaters, were some of the discomforts that any company outside and most of them within the larger cities had to endure. Haphazard and slipshod rehearsals, incongruous scenery, bad lighting, jealousies, and indifference, made the underworld of opera almost anywhere a troublous matter. Of sympathy from outside there was little; ignoble salaries had to be supplemented by ignoble resorts; musical art, whether inspiring or degrading, was less an end than a means, and the split slippers of the comparses, lasting barely a week owing to their wooden *pointes,* had to be made good somehow, but not always at the expense of the management. So the members of the company, driven into themselves, were free to welcome help from any direction. No doubt Richard with his sheltering arm had to ward

off, many a time, undesired attentions to the ladies of the company.

Before the company reached its winter quarters at Magdeburg it visited some small towns under touring conditions less irksome, let us hope, than those which we have just been considering. The routine work could not have been very exacting, for Wagner had time to begin his *Second Symphony*. By the autumn he was with the company in Magdeburg till the following spring. Here he wrote the *Columbus Overture,* to a play by his friend Apel, performed later at Leipzig, Riga, and Paris, and published sixty-three years later.

Meanwhile the orchestration of *Das Liebesverbot* was in progress, and by March, 1836, was ready for production. But the usual difficulties overtook the company: the treasury was void, and every one was seeking fresh engagements. The prospect of the opera being performed appeared hopeless. Whether it was that the singers felt sympathy with the twenty-three-year-old composer and were willing to help him, or were anxious to keep on good terms with him as a likely impresario in the future, it is to their credit that they gave him loyal support. Only ten days were left in which to rehearse.

Then the police stepped in. The two performances were to be given in Holy Week, but the title, *Love Forbidden,* was suggestive of something not exactly in keeping with the religious ceremonies in the churches and it had to be changed. Wagner was able to convince the authorities that anything adapted

from a play by Shakespeare must be highly moral as coming from Puritan England, and the opera was announced as *Die Novize von Palermo,* a title which, when read in connection with the other, was, if anything, more " pikant."

It takes more than ten days to produce a " grand comic opera," as Wagner called it, and as was to be expected the affair was a fiasco. Nobody knew his or her part, and as there was some " tra-la-la " business, no doubt this language, idiomatic in opera alone, without grammar, syntax, or even dictionary, replaced when convenient the actual words of the text. So much for the first performance. The second was to have been Wagner's Benefit Night, a goodly custom when audience and company were to pay tribute in kind to show their appreciation of the young conductor.

But in the year 1836 a German opera company was not unlike an Italian company in some of the lesser towns of the Peninsula, even to-day, when the soprano goes on strike for an entire morning because the tenor has given his buttonhole to the second contralto. Something of the kind happened to make the "Benefit " a catastrophe. A few minutes before the curtain was to have gone up, a poignant act of the unwritten play, "Cherchez le Drama," was being staged in all its virulence behind the scenes. The husband of the prima donna assoluta attacked the second tenor for his disregard for the vows of wedlock: madame prima donna rashly intervened; others who had contracted *mariages de circonstances* joined in, and the

manager had to go before the curtain and announce that " all money would be returned at the doors."

But what of Richard all this time? The hearts of all artists must go out to him in his dismay when, while waiting for the " call " to go into the orchestra, he found himself in the midst of a rabble who never gave him a thought, but who, at the close of a bankrupt season, chose this as the moment for conducting *their* scores of " Forbidden Love " in their own fashion.

Let us hope that in the disturbance Wagner's first and only thought was for Minna, and that, with his arm round her dainty waist, he had taken her for cover and for safety into the orchestra, possibly behind the big drum.

2. A MARRIAGE

After the muddle and confusion of the performance of *Das Liebesverbot* the company broke up and left Magdeburg. Wagner remained, to ponder over the wreckage. But he was not of the stuff to know what failure meant, although his creditors had that bitter experience over and over again throughout his life. Some of the company had reached Berlin, and in the hope of obtaining introductions and work he went thither with his *Liebesverbot,* about the middle of May, 1836.

But at that time Berlin was not the place for a young composer whose success had been purely local. For it was doing its best to contain two, Meyerbeer,

whose *Huguenots* had been produced with great success on February 21, 1836, and Mendelssohn, whose brilliance had dazzled all Germany. His oratoria, *St. Paul,* had been given in Leipzig a month before Wagner arrived in Berlin. There was nothing in sight for him.

Minna however, had obtained an engagement in Königsberg, and a hint from her of the likelihood of the conductorship in the theater there becoming vacant brought him to her feet at the beginning of August. It is clear that something more intimate than the camaraderie to be found in theatrical companies had existed between the two at Magdeburg, and Minna, who thought of him more as her man out of work than as an artist, bestirred herself to get him the appointment.

But the musical directorship was clung to by a man for reasons which were not purely artistic, and Wagner again was without resources. The bills arrived in sheaves, and he flew to Minna for comfort and consolation. On November 24 he married her, and in so doing wrecked her career on the stage, and converted her into a humdrum Hausfrau, a maid-of-all-work. He was then twenty-two and a half; she was twenty-seven, having been born on September 5, 1809.

She was not ignorant of the world: she had known a good deal about it since she was sixteen, and had a daughter, Natalie, old enough to be passed off as her younger sister. Her identity was suspected but not discovered during Minna's lifetime.

From the first there were bickerings. Although she did not understand her Richard, Minna showed an immense amount of patience with him in his tantrums. She has been reproached repeatedly because she scarcely realized how great a privilege it was to be united to such a man, but what was there about him for her or anyone else to see when he was in his twenty-fourth year? She would have been more than human if she had not wondered how his overtures which he was then writing, *Rule, Britannia* and *Polonia,* unmarketable then, and not to be published till seventy years later, were to keep the wolf from the door. It was foolish to project plans for grand operas with *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot* collecting dust.

Had he not been conducting other men's operas, and why should he not write operas for other men to conduct? Well, there it was.

On the scent for a text he came across a novel, *Die Hohe Braut,* which struck him as containing the required material. He sketched a scenario and sent it to Friedrich Brockhaus, who had married his sister Luise, with the request to forward it to Scribe, the author of the text of *The Huguenots,* with a view to its being put into orthodox operatic form. Nothing came of the suggested collaboration, and after some alterations it was ultimately set by Johann Friedrich Kittl. (It was first performed, with immense enthusiasm in Prague on February 19, 1848, with the title, *Bianca und Giuseppe, oder die Franzosen vor Nissa.*)

When at last the vacancy in the theater occurred, in the spring of 1837, Wagner found himself again connected with an administration on the verge of bankruptcy. No less confusing were his own affairs, financial as well as matrimonial. The situation had become intolerable. It was long since both ends had met. It was Minna who had the disagreeable tasks while Richard sheltered himself behind the ample folds of her skirts. It was Minna who had to temporize with butcher, and grocer and baker. It was Minna who had to do the hedging and cadging while Richard basked in his own limelight.

In the background there was her sympathizer, Dietrich, a man of means, whose attentions to her had let loose in full blast Richard's jealousy. We shall never know whether any of the bills were met by Dietrich. In any case Minna's patience had reached breaking-point, and on May 31, 1837, while Wagner was at the theater, she left the house for Dresden, escorted part of the way by her admirer, who, at that time at any rate, was not her lover. Three days later Wagner ran her to earth. With reproaches and tears the scandal was patched up. But Dietrich was still hanging about, and Minna again went off with him—this time, it would appear, for good; this time she had made a mistake. When he was tired of her he deserted her, leaving her in the blackest misery. At length, having passed the limit of her endurance, she gave in and asked to be taken back.

Wagner was not the man to let slip the oppor-

tunity for a magnificent gesture: he forgave and promised to forget—at least that is *his* part of the story, published after Minna was dead. What *her* part was, nobody knows.[1]

With the insolvency of the Königsberg theater Wagner's appointment came to an end. In the English edition of *Glasenapp* the first episode with Minna is not mentioned, but we are told that in the summer of 1837 Wagner went to Dresden *via* Berlin. It is possible that when there he was present at a performance of *The Huguenots,* and realized the lines upon which he must work in order to gain a popular success. If Scribe and Meyerbeer between them with forty performances could share three hundred thousand francs, what might he not do? Chance put into his hands a translation of Bulwer Lytton's *Rienzi,* which gave him his opportunity, it might be called his craving, for spectacular effects. The plot had long been in his thoughts, but the idea of proceeding with the text had for the moment to be set aside, for he had secured the post of musical conductor of the theater at Riga. This was in August, 1837.

The manager was Karl von Holtei, a personage upon whose notions of the ultra-operatic services of his corps a significant if not lurid light is thrown by Wagner's own words. "He made no bones about confessing that since the theater had been run in the grooves of social respectability it had lost its own

[1] In his *Wagner as Man and Artist* Ernest Newman has made the most complete and fully documented study of Minna in her relations with Wagner and his friends, to which work the reader is referred.

true tendency, which he should soonest hope to restore, even yet, with a troop of strolling players. To this opinion the anything but witless man adhered."[1]

On the next page Glasenapp himself says, as if quoting Holtei, "'Oh! I've brought some *ladies* of quite criminal beauty with me,' he would whisper in allusion to the sisters Reithmeier; for the sly dog knew his hearers' weakness, and fancied that a better bait than highfaluting." Ellis has made the best of a passage which is awkward in more than one sense. In the *Fourth German Edition*, Vol. i, p. 287, Holtei is made to say, "I have brought along *ladies* [his italics] of a loveliness which is contrary to police regulations [polizeiwidrig hübsch]" . . . a dangerous aspect for the musical bloods (Kunstblüte) of Riga, not extra fastidious as to taste, and so the new manager was popular.

What possible inference is to be drawn from these words? Surely only one. Riga was large and populous, flourishing with the well-to-do; there was money to be made and money to be spent. What was the "own true tendency" of the theater that has been ruined by "social respectability," and by what ulterior means did the manager propose to "restore" its questionable repute?

"Na, na!" as Wagner often wrote in his letters to Minna.

Minna herself, penitent, arrived in October, her younger sister Amalie with her, engaged as the sub-

[1] *Glasenapp*, English edition, vol. i, p. 229. *Prose Works*, vol. v, p. 172. *My Life*, vol. i, p. 189.

stitute for the prima donna who had not fulfilled her contract; but just as likely, in Minna's mind, as a protection in case Richard, while shrewdly remembering himself in all things and on all occasions, should "forget himself."

At last in Riga, where he had a fixed though penurious salary, he had time to think. His duties do not strike us as being very exacting. In the first twelve months, ending in July, 1838, he had conducted eighty-five performances of sixteen operas, with most of which he was familiar; and in his second season there were eighty-three performances of twenty-three operas. To be sure there were rehearsals, indifferent singers to be coached, band parts to be checked and revised and copied, but he had an efficient assistant in Löbmann, who could be trusted with the bâton when he was not needed as a violinist. In addition to the work of the theater there was concert-giving in the Schwarzhäupterhaus with augmented orchestra, which gave him more scope.

Meanwhile there were influences in motion to undermine his position. Without his knowledge a change in the management of the theater unexpectedly deprived Wagner of his conductorship. Small wonder that he was furious as much because he had been kept in the dark as because the interloper had professed to be his friend.

But at least he could find distraction in *Rienzi,* the first act of which was scored by February, 1839, before he was dispossessed of his appointment. The changes in the theater had made further stay in Riga

undesirable; after so grave a slight he could not well remain in a town which had nothing to offer him.

With *Rienzi* well in hand he had to consider the likelihood of its production, and Paris, which at one time had been little more than a dream, began to occupy his mind as a definite project. But how was he to get there?

Riga was in Russia in those days, but while it was one thing to get into the country, it was quite another thing to get out of it. There were formalities, trifles like passports, notices in the newspapers that Herr So-and-so proposed to travel to Prussia. This last was a thoughtful precaution, for it put landlords and tradesmen on their guard lest their tenants and customers should flit without warning, leaving both unpaid.

One matter might have aroused the suspicion of the police and customs officers, and that was the selling of the Wagners' larger and heavier furniture. This, coupled with the fact that the raison d'être of their stay in Riga had ceased, might have justified inquiries. But as a few friends were allowed to share the secret of the coming departure, the furniture difficulty may have been surmounted quietly.

But there were the bills, and Richard had to be disposed of as if he were contraband. Then there was the packing. We can imagine the ever-solicitous Minna perspiring over the bundles and packages containing treasurable rubbish, pots in the blankets, pans in the sheets, while Richard, heedless of remonstrances, rolled the candlesticks in Minna's winter

petticoat, and packed his manuscripts and music paper in her little trunk, from which her most cherished odds and ends had been evicted.

Then Richard next—and that frontier. There were no railways; the journey had to be made by coach with investigations at post-stages by prescribed routes, or on foot, to escape the line of sentries.

But Wagner was something more than contraband: he was in pawn. He had surrendered his passport (which was the ticket) and by so doing had pledged himself to pay his bills. It was thanks to the good offices of Abraham Möller that he was to gain his first experience of escape from examination. Möller was well known in the theatrical world of these parts, and no doubt Wagner was not the first to enjoy his protection. Others, more engaging and attractive, with better reason for leaving Russia, may have come under his wing. At any rate, the weather was pleasant, a ration of vodka, judiciously served out in the right quarters, helped in the good work, and on June 26 Richard and Minna, accompanied by a large dog, set out in a carriage. It took two days to reach the Russian lines. Möller's was good staff-work: the party was met by a guide who smuggled the pair by a devious route to an ill-favored house where they had to wait till it was dark. There was not much darkness in that latitude in June. They had only a very short time in which to run for it while the sentries were being changed, but they crossed in safety the trench which marked the entire length of the Russo-Prussian frontier, and reached a Prussian vil-

lage. Next day they were at Arnau, with Königsberg in the distance. Thence they went to Pillau, a little Prussian seaport on the most southerly of the two tongues of land (Nehrungen) in the Baltic. Here Richard and Minna, with the luggage and the dog, embarked on the English vessel, the *Thetis,* for Paris *via* London.

3. THE FLYING "THETIS"

What possessed Wagner to take this roundabout way to Paris? It was the cheapest kind of transport available: to travel by road would have entailed expenses at inns, and there was the dog, to which objections certainly would have been raised by passengers on a diligence. Awkward encounters with creditors on the road were not to be thought of, for the places were by no means few where the tipstaff lay in wait for passengers on stage-coaches trundling over the cobbles to the post-house. The sea voyage was the only alternative.

But adventures were in store after leaving Arnau. The travelers were bundled into a country cart, which gave them many a jolt over rough tracks taken to avoid curious eyes in the villages through which the main road lay. The climax was an upset which gave Minna a severe shaking. At Pillau they had to wait till the captain of the *Thetis* condescended to sail, and even then they had to be got on board in the dark and sent below in case the port officials should notice that passengers were being carried. This was the third major experience—there were others of a minor

character—in these critical weeks; it was something to have been contraband, then in pawn, and lastly a stowaway in that short period.

As the master and crew numbered seven, all told, the vessel could not have been anything larger than a schooner or ketch, well under seventy tons, and making, as then built and rigged, about eight knots in a favorable wind.

Fortunately all went well as far as Elsinore, but on clearing the Narrows the Cattegat began to show its teeth, and beyond the Skaw the *Thetis* sailed into real dirty weather and got blown out of her course. So a run had to be made for it under shortened sail for the nearest shelter, which was the fjord hard by Arendal.

It is difficult to understand how this vessel could have been worked with so small a crew, and it is likely that her tonnage was much less than estimated here. Wagner's description of the "hurricane" was more likely the Skager Rack in her normal mood, but it was no place for an undermanned and badly found vessel. He was able, at all events, to go ashore and have some days in comparative peace. Sail was set once more and by the evening of August 12 the travelers swung at anchor in the Thames.

The voyage had done Wagner at least one good turn. Seasick and wretched as he was, the brine, never in his blood, had flooded his music. He repaid the sea in his own coin, and the coin was the *Flying Dutchman.*

His doings in London have been recorded. Music-

ally they have no interest, except in so far as his attempt to see Bulwer Lytton is concerned. Wagner's *Rienzi* was ready and he was anxious to meet the English peer whose imagination had stimulated him. But his was the lot of every foreigner who lands himself on these shores, ignorant of the language, and with no compatriot to guide him. So with wonder at the shipping in the Pool, and the bigness of the City and streets, he embarked for Boulogne with a lightened purse.

During the Channel crossing he fell in with a Jewish family called Manson, who told him that Meyerbeer was in Boulogne. This was the best of news.

The ever resourceful Minna found and furnished rooms out of the town, and Richard hied him to call on the great man. It is not difficult to picture the scene: the reserved but accessible, urbane man of the world, confronted by a little, excitable, voluble bundle of nerves: the elder man graciously attentive, the younger reading—yes, Meyerbeer was not to be let off—reading the text of *Rienzi,* and to use Wagner's own words, " he really listened up to the end of the third act." We do not know what Meyerbeer's thoughts were; he may have felt that here was a true disciple to be encouraged. To Wagner's annoyance he repeatedly praised his penmanship; but of the material, not a syllable. However, Meyerbeer showed him much kindness and gave him letters of introduction to the manager of the Paris Opera, and to Habeneck, the conductor.

At length it was time to be thinking of Paris, and a start was made on September 16, 1839, by diligence, with the usual incumbrance caused by the dog.

Wagner says that he had written to Avenarius, who was about to marry his sister Cæcilie, to find rooms, but either the letter miscarried or Avenarius did nothing. In the latter case he may have been indisposed to encourage a future brother-in-law who might prove an undesirable neighbor, and a relative who might not be trusted to do him credit. It is scarcely conceivable that he would have stooped to serve him ill by considering the so-called *Maison de Molière* good enough for him.

CHAPTER FOUR: "NACH PARIS"

ON September 23, 1839, Wagner and Minna entered Paris by diligence, and alighted in the short and narrow rue de la Jussienne, which still exists, across the way from the Hôtel des Postes. It is possible that the lodging which he engaged was recommended by some tout on the lookout for strangers, and about a quarter of a mile away was rue de la Tonnellerie, an hôtel meublé being at No. 3. This was the reputed birthplace of Molière, the evidence thereof being a stucco bust of the dramatist placed on the front of the house. Perhaps it was this tradition that attracted Wagner.

Yet Molière was not born here, but in a house near by, in rue des Vielles Étuves, on whose site is now No. 92 rue Saint Honoré. It was not till Molière was about eleven years of age, in 1633, that his parents moved three or four blocks east, to 3 rue de la Tonnellerie. This street is obliterated though local legend claims the present 31 rue du Pont Neuf as standing on the authentic site of the hôtel meublé.

The neighborhood was a slum. Thirteen years later, in an official register the house was described as containing among its inhabitants 7 workmen " d'une solvabilité douteuse," (living from hand to mouth).

Although his brothers-in-law, Brockhaus, married to Luise, and Avenarius, now married to Cæcilie, were established in their bookselling and publishing business in rue de Richelieu, they had not confidence

enough in his work to help him. To them Wagner's arrival must have appeared a foolhardy adventure, since he had little else than letters of introduction from Meyerbeer and some strange compositions to justify his step.

For six and a half months Wagner and his wife lived in this miserable quarter till April 15, 1840. The address by Les Halles was standing in his light. The surroundings were poverty-stricken and the old arches of the market had an unsavory reputation. Appearances were against a man who had to put up with such conditions.

His first step was to get in touch with the manager of the Théâtre de la Renaissance, with a view to having his *Liebesverbot* produced. At first sight Meyerbeer's letter of introduction appeared to have wrought a miracle, and the outlook was hopeful. A French text had to be provided, and this was done so well by Dumersan, experienced in this kind of work, that Wagner declared that his music looked better in its French dress than in its German. But the theater belied its name; it had a habit of doing so; its " renaissance " was generally a miscarriage, and once more Wagner was set back by a bankrupt concern.

Nothing daunted, he made an attempt with songs, but they were so alien to the French mode of thought that he succeeded in getting only one accepted, Heine's *Die Beiden Grenadière,* with a French translation. The subject, perhaps, and the employment of *La Marseillaise* had some weight. The other three were published thirty years later by Flaxland. They

came out at the time as a Supplement in *Europa,* published in Stuttgart in 1841.[1]

Habeneck at this time was at the head of the Conservatoire, adding to his renown as an interpreter of Beethoven's Symphonies, and the performances of these works fired Wagner to make an effort in an entirely fresh direction. It was to be a Symphony on the subject of Goethe's *Faust,* but he never got beyond the first movement. Incomplete as it then was, Habeneck rehearsed it in March, 1840, to the stupefaction of the orchestra. At a later stage it was rewritten, and of all the works of his in the modern repertoire it is the oldest in point of years, with an interest that is its own.

Thanks to the good will of Schlesinger, he was given employment, not very exacting in its nature, till further on in the year, 1840, he became a regular contributor to the *Revue et Gazette Musicale.*

The fact that the house in which he was living had once sheltered Molière was poor compensation for the discomfort and the shifts to which Richard and Minna had to resort. So they moved to 25 rue du Helder in April, a modest house but respectable, where he could receive visitors without apologies. The house was pulled down later to make way for the extension eastward of the new Boulevard Hausmann.

But while he pursued his ideals and disregarded

[1] Wagner published at his own expense his version of *Les Deux Grenadiers.* His use of the theme was not opportune, for Louis Philippe proscribed the song as an expression of national aspirations.

such mundane affairs as payment of his bills, his creditors were in full cry after him. So it came about that on September 20, 1840, he wrote to an old friend of his youth, asking for the loan of 300 thaler. The friend was Theodor Apel, a poet, well-to-do and therefore not hard put to it to find the sum. There was no reply. Four weeks later, on October 20, it was Minna—as usual—who had to repeat the request, adding that Richard was now in prison in rue de Clichy for debt.

It was not "imprisonment" in our sense of the word; it was more like "open arrest" or "C.B." But though a certain amount of liberty was allowed, the life had not that exquisite freedom from care that the "guests" enjoyed in Sainte-Pélagie and For l'Évêque (where the entire company of the Théâtre Français spent ten months during the Terror) or even the Bastille, which was *hors concours* as a place of residence for the gay sparks of the City, a little too forward and persevering in their gallantry.

Minna would have joined her Richard, we may be sure, had rue de Clichy been cheaper than rue du Helder, but she simply could not afford the luxury of a prison, so up went the yellow ticket, *"Chambre à louer,"* and in came the lodger.

Richard was not the man to lose time, even if he was "doing" it, and being infinitely more comfortable in the debtors' prison than he had been in rue de la Tonnellerie, he finished his *Rienzi* overture and the entire work was completed by November. It is quite probable that he also hatched the plot of the

Flying Dutchman about the same time. He was not the first to discover in temporary and embarrassing quarters "Le Moyen de Parvenir." A certain Béroalde de Verville had been at it before him. Never will it be said of Wagner that he had an idle moment, no matter where he was. His release, if indeed release it was, was due to his brothers-in-law in Paris coming to terms with an implacable creditor who happened to be a compatriot of everyone concerned.

But in addition to his dramatic work, he was occupied, as has been said, by writing articles for Schlesinger. These were in German to begin with, but translated into French, with modifications so as not to offend the susceptibilities of his readers, and also to do a little log rolling in favor of his publisher's wares. He also went further afield, and the studious in Dresden and Stuttgart were apprised of his thoughts.

Free at length, in December he dispatched his *Rienzi* to Dresden, but the strain of keeping up two establishments, of which one was not the least welcome, brought him face to face with the landlady of the other. She took a less benevolent view of the situation that the state, which had obligingly accommodated him, on terms, of course, in the establishment of rue de Clichy.

With all these ups and downs Wagner was fortunate in having Minna standing by. She was just the wife for the moment, keeping things going by visits to the Mont de Piété, writing begging letters for him, and looking after the lodger. Had she been

the " temperamental " wife whom his friends in later years had made up their minds that he should have wedded, even before the shadow of Cosima von Bülow loomed across his path, there is no knowing how Richard would have come through these anxious days. It must be pointed out in all justice that it was Minna who was the stand-by in the adverse times. Dense, as the biographers attempt to make her out, with her Hausfrau notions of thrift, it was she and no other who " mothered " Wagner through the most difficult periods of his life. When Frau von Bülow entered upon the scene Wagner had an assured though small pension from Ludwig II, and was in a sense independent. We are not so clear that Frau von Bülow would have been quite the best companion for Wagner in these early straitened days.

A change of air was clearly necessary, so at the end of April, the 29th, 1841, the pair moved to Meudon in spite of the claims of the landlady of rue du Helder for arrears of rent. Fortunately a subtenant was found who took over the furnished apartments. Like his other temporary lodgings, the house which he occupied at Meudon has been demolished. It was 3 Avenue de Meudon. Not without difficulty was a lodging found out of earshot of pianos. At last Richard found one which did not harbor the venomous thing. But one fine day he heard the dreaded sounds, and after searching the house and drawing blank, he ran the miscreant to earth in the cellar. It was a combination of piano and harp, and the

landlord, an Academician, no less, was extracting noises from it. It speedily went to the stake.

Earlier in the year, on February 4, his *Columbus* overture had been given a performance at a concert, mainly of German music, organized by Schlesinger. On this occasion Charles Hallé's name appeared on the program along with Wagner's. The conditions were not favorable; the orchestral players were indifferent if not hostile. We are not told if this state of affairs was due to Wagner's attitude towards them at rehearsal—" cet Allemand hargneux, insociable, qui écorchait le français et déblatérait contre tout le monde[1] or to technical difficulties which at that time lay outside their capabilities. After listening in patience for some time, the audience began to hiss. Music too strongly impregnated with " parfum Allemand " was not for an audience accustomed to the more seductive and volatile *bouquet* of Italian opera. The performance, however, was not without value in a sense other than musical. When the hissing began, Minna burst into tears. She has been handled in none too kindly a fashion for her attitude towards her husband's music—unsympathetic, it has been called—but this surely was a moment when she was deeply wounded by the manner in which it was re-

[1] (Surly, insociable, who mangled the French language and maligned everybody.) This was the description of Wagner given to Servières by Schœnewerk, the successor of Flaxland, one of Wagner's Paris publishers. See *Wagner jugé en France,* p. 11, Paris [1887], and in *La Revue Musicale, numéro spécial,* October, 1923, p. 93.

ceived. At this period of her life, at any rate, she was game and put up a sturdy fight against adversity.

Meudon unfortunately was not destined to see any improvement in Wagner's affairs, and he was glad to dispose of his sketch of *The Flying Dutchman* to the Paris Opera, with the reservation of the right to use the subject in some other form. A French version, *Le Vaisseau Fantôme,* with music by Dietsch, was produced at the Paris Opera in 1842, but proved a failure. We will consider this presently.

The turning point in Wagner's life came at last. He was to have recognition in his own country and among his own friends. A letter from von Lüttischau, the manager of the Dresden Opera, dated June 29, 1841, informed him that his opera, *Rienzi,* had been accepted for performance. This well might go far to compensate him for his wretched hand-to-mouth days in Paris. But the pressing difficulty was the usual one—lack of money. It was imperative that he should return to Dresden as soon as possible, and be free from the hack-work of arranging pot-pourris and piano transcriptions. His journalistic work, however, did not come within this category, for here at least he was expressing himself, and not merely echoing the ideas of others for whom he had no great love. This success was to put heart into the man, and he worked now with amazing sureness and rapidity.

The sketch of the music of *The Flying Dutchman* was prepared in seven weeks, between the last week

of July, 1841, and September 13. The orchestration was finished by the end of the year.

The date that most concerns us here is that of the composition of the poem. It was begun on May 18 and finished on May 28.[1]

Now concerning Pierre Dietsch. The writer of the article on this composer in *Grove the Second,* most prejudicially conveys the impression that Dietsch, in using a scenario of Wagner's—not his text, for that was in French by another hand——" acquired an unenviable notoriety as the purchaser [*sic*] of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* libretto [*sic*] at a time when Wagner was in straitened circumstances in Paris."

One loses patience with biased and ex-parte opinions of this kind, especially in a work of reference. Grove himself, in the *First edition,* Vol. iv, p. 212a, said of *Le Vaisseau Fantôme,* Dietsch's opera, " words translated or imitated from the German of Richard Wagner."

Let us see where we are. In the summer of 1840 Meyerbeer was in Paris, and was urging Pillet, the Director of the Opera, to show Wagner some consideration. By Meyerbeer's advice Wagner sent in a scenario based on the legend of the *Flying Dutchman,* with the suggestion that a text in French might be prepared for him to set to music. Pillet was struck by the dramatic idea, but kept putting Wagner off, and finding excuses for postponement. Wagner

[1] These dates are given in W. Ashton Ellis's note to the " Author's [Wagner's] Introduction " to the seventh volume of the English edition of the *Prose Works,* p. 3.

failed to obtain the return of his manuscript. But in some roundabout way he heard that the scenario had been used as the basis of a text in French by Paul Foucher, Victor Hugo's brother-in-law, and that Pillet had passed on the text to another composer who was a friend of his, namely, Dietsch. Against this Wagner very rightly protested, but had to accept the situation. He sold the scenario for 500 francs, reserving the right to use the legend as and when he chose. Servières, who has just been quoted, has attempted to clear up the mystery about this transaction. On three occasions, in 1880, in 1896, and in 1923, the Archives of the Opera were searched for the receipt of the 500 francs, but none was found.

Two questions arise. Was Dietsch aware that Foucher had founded the text on Wagner's scenario ?

The other question is, When did the sale take place ? If it was " official," as coming out of the funds of the Opera, there must have been a receipt somewhere in the archives. If Pillet, knowing Wagner to be a poor man with litigation out of the question, acted dishonestly, he may have paid Wagner out of his own pocket, glad to get off so cheaply.

As to the date of the sale, Ellis (Vol. i, p. 324)' tells us that the last interview with Pillet took place " a day or two before the recent glorious news "—of the acceptance of *Rienzi,* and this fixes the date somewhere in the last ten days of June, 1841.

The dates speak for themselves. The poem of the *Flying Dutchman* was completed by May 28, and some time about June 29 Wagner sold to Pillet a

scenario on the same subject, reserving the right to use the idea. As Dietsch's opera did not succeed, it is unlikely that it was ever printed, otherwise it would have been interesting to see whether its scenario differed from that which Wagner "reserved," having already written the complete text.

Dietsch's *Vaisseau Fantôme,* as has been said, was a failure. Twenty years later, on March 13, 1861, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* was also a failure, and the conductor then was . . . Dietsch.

At Meudon Wagner was working with titanic energy at his *Dutchman,* having realized, we may assume, that if two of the kind were in the field, one must go under. The world, the expanse of ocean, was not broad enough for two Vanderdeckens. For the gayety of nations it will always be regretted that Richard Wagner did not collaborate with Henry Irving, when he of the Lyceum Theatre essayed Vanderdecken in the year 1878. We might then have enjoyed the spectacle of Wagner the comedian showing Irving how to act, and Irving, illiterate in the musical sense, teaching Wagner how to write appropriate music.

About the middle of October, 1841, the Wagner ménage returned to Paris. The landlady of rue du Helder had to make the most of the rent that was in arrears by selling Wagner's furniture. To judge by her name alone, Madame de Laroque de Viéville would hardly be the person to press unduly a tenant. Let us hope she came well out of the sale. The Hôtel Drouot in those days would not have condes-

cended to shelter the Wagner stuff. But to-day? There are persons so eager that they would bid, and bid high, for any cracked wash-hand basin which by imagination could be converted into a soup tureen used by Wagner.

It was to *la Rive Gauche* that Wagner went, to 14 rue Jacob, a house still standing, but the official registers have not any account of its plan or occupants. According to Wagner his successor was Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the revolutionary socialist . . . and Amurath?

The orchestration of the *Dutchman* was progressing, but being continually interrupted by article-writing for hard cash. So he continued his journalist work, wrote criticisms, scribbled dance music for the music publishers, and made fantasias on, and pianoforte arrangements of, popular operas. On one occasion, at least, he allowed himself an amazing lapse of good taste by writing a foolish article on Rossini, which was obnoxious to Rossini's co-religionists, and to make matters worse he signed it with the name of the musician who had conducted the wretched performance of his *Columbus* overture. This was not the only occasion standing to his discredit on which he used not a fictitious name, but the name of an actual person as the signature to some article of his. It says much for those who were with him during the first stay in Paris that they tolerated the man at all—because of his music and not because of himself. May there not have been personal affronts which caused deep resentment and delayed his pro-

gress? It would not do to call them merely "misunderstandings." When a man of Wagner's temperament chooses to inhabit a glass house, it is apt to become rather draughty after a while.

The last three months in Paris were spent chiefly in accumulating funds sufficient to enable him to reach Dresden. At the same time he was urging forward the production of *Rienzi* and attempting to have the *Dutchman* accepted in Berlin. On April 7, 1842, he left Paris, having had one performance there in two and a half years, but with stupendous performances of another kind—the completion of *Rienzi* and the composing of the *Dutchman*—great achievements for a man barely thirty, who, despite the anxiety and misery of these Paris days, kept the art and the music that were in him high and clean.

CHAPTER FIVE: RIENZI

THE return journey from Paris to Dresden took five days and five nights, and Wagner arrived at the capital on April 12, 1842, back again among people with whom he could converse in his native tongue without that diffidence which is felt when thoughts have to be expressed in a foreign language. He was with his own family in Leipzig three days later, and encountering Mendelssohn. But he felt too bitterly the contrast between his own hand-to-mouth existence and the opulence of Mendelssohn's surroundings ever to find a community of interests. Wagner himself wanted to live amid a prodigality of luxury. He could not see that Life was more than diatonic: it had tones more finely shaded than quarter tones, and that had he been in the art of living as big in his endurance and tolerance as he was in his music he would have saved himself (not to speak of many another) needless heartbreaks.

Then he made a dash to Berlin, that city "of sordid spaces and pretensions to greatness," to use his own words. But it had nothing as yet for him, so back he came to Leipzig for a moment, where brother-in-law Hermann Brockhaus, Professor of Oriental Languages in the University, suggested "merely as a duty," a loan of 600 marks, to be paid in six monthly installments—five pounds sterling per month, no less.

With this lavish allowance he proceeded to Dresden to supervise the preparations for *Rienzi*. To all

appearances the opera management would have been better pleased had he not been quite so close at hand.

Not content with this huge work on his shoulders, whose stage appliances alone, new scenery, special lighting effects—that pyromania!—those 537 costumes, were to absorb every moment before the winter season, he must needs rush back to Leipzig to urge the acceptance by Berlin of the *Dutchman,* which, music apart, was to try the invention and temper of the machinist.

He needed a holiday and off he went with Minna and "her so-called sister" (really her daughter, Natalie) to Teplitz, where his mother arrived later.

It was here that that incandescent brain of his fused the metal that was to be poured into the *Tannhäuser* mold. He had seen and heard enough to convince him of a new mission, and barely six weeks later he was back in Dresden. At Teplitz he left his mother, drowsing gently by the kitchen fire in a "second-class inn," while Minna, thinking of her past triumphs on the stage and of her numerous bygone adorers, was washing up in the scullery, and perhaps murmuring to herself, "What would they say if they saw me now?"

Many a time in those days of narrow straits must there have been a quiver of the lip and the suspicion of a tear that did not fall.

It was not Wagner's way to allow any gaps in his life: he filled every moment, despite those provocative lacunæ, those significant " asterisks," which seem to

radiate from the pages of his over-credulous biographers. *Tannhäuser* now was in his mind, a purely Germanic theme more after his heart than the pinchbeck trimmings of historical subjects. Consider how far he had gone. He had scarcely passed his twenty-ninth birthday, yet apart from such experiments as *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot,* and his drafts of plots and projects of librettos, he had completed two huge operas, was looking after the one, with the immense strain of rehearsals and stage-management, was seeking an opera-house for the other, and was now embarking on the enterprise which was to bring to us argosies deep-laden with imperishable merchandise.

In writing of Halévy's *Reine de Chypre* Wagner indulged in some mildly sarcastic remarks on the subject of opera books based upon history. But history, the jade, had a way of frustrating the knavish tricks of librettists by denying them an orthodox operatic dénouement, or at any rate by arranging the scène à faire in the wrong act. In his own *Rienzi,* to be sure, he was in no such plight, although indeed the ballet came in the second act. If *Rienzi* was not conceived on the lines of grand opera, it is difficult to see what was in his mind. It was compounded of the very olla podrida that he professed to find so difficult to digest in the case of others. He had spectacles, processions, and street fights; prayers and supplications; Rienzi on horseback, swords clashing on shields, a ten-minutes' battle "off," a conflagration and a final

crash. This was the stock-in-trade that he scoffed at when he saw it used by others.

Quite apart from the music, the work was to tax the patience and endurance of everyone concerned. Reissiger had charge of the orchestra; Fischer rehearsed the chorus; Tichatschek, in "new silver armor," was the Rienzi, Henriette Wüst the Irene, while the forty-year-old Schröder-Devrient, now somewhat "imposing," was cast for the slim lad, Adriano.

Certainly Wagner had no reason to complain of his principals. They were artists with great reputations, and their whole-hearted co-operation, with Schröder-Devrient now and then cantankerous, proves that Wagner, when at work, was in a most attractive and engaging mood. For the production of *Rienzi* was no bagatelle. He was wise to leave the conducting in the hands of Reissiger, but the actual stage-management and the handling of the crowds could not be trusted to anyone except the composer himself. Wagner was now to show whether the experience gained in other opera-houses, often with makeshift rehearsals, was to put him in the ranks of those who had their stage knowledge at their finger tips, and when the stage directions are studied and the complicated movements visualized, the difficulties will be admitted. Yet in the midst of it all Minna and he had barely enough to live on. Surely this, if any, was the time when Wagner could have appealed to his friends without humiliation.

On October 20, 1842, the curtain rose at six o'clock on *Rienzi*. The house was crowded: we can just see those two, Minna and Richard, in the darkest corner of the auditorium. The enthusiastic applause which greeted the Overture—a self-contained number—lifted a weight off the minds of all concerned, and the work proceeded in triumph.

But it was nearly ten o'clock before the third act was finished, the hour when all good Dresdeners should have been at their supper, and there were two more to follow. The opera did not end till after midnight—six hours of it! Had it not occurred to anyone to time the acts? Well, even with the increased prices no one could complain that he had not had good value for his money.

Wagner grasped the situation in a flash. He had won a volkommender Sieg. He was amazed at it all, but if the opera was to be given again it must be shortened at once.

We can imagine the practical Minna urging this during the less than half a dozen hours when both should have been sound asleep. But there was no time to be lost, and next morning he was off at eight o'clock to make cuts and instruct the copyists. By the afternoon he discovered that Tichatschek had ordered the cuts to be restored. But the opera was impossible in its original length in exacting a severe strain of the company, as well as imperiling its chances.

The second performance was given on October 26, and a third within the fortnight. But even with

cuts the opera was still too long; it played from six till ten-thirty. The experiment was tried of giving it in full in two sections on consecutive nights—two acts or *Rienzi's Greatness* for the first night, and the other three acts, *Rienzi's Fall,* for the second. This was not successful, for the public objected to paying twice over at increased prices in order to see one opera. Wagner said it was "fatal to the attendance." The most recent edition of the opera, in piano score, gives the cuts made by Wagner and others so as to bring the work within practical and reasonable dimensions. It is a pity that he did not show the same consideration for his audiences in his later works.

With his artistic future secure, it is strange to read in *My Life* (p. 285), "For a brief space I felt myself, for the first and only time in my life, so pleasantly borne along on the breath of general good will, that all my former troubles seemed amply requited." "For the first and only time"—was this quite sincere? Twenty years later he was to find himself secured from anxiety through the patronage of Ludwig II of Bavaria, and in close intimacy with Hans von Bülow's wife. It is, however, right to say that *My Life* ends on the eve of these momentous events.

With the success of *Rienzi* we may surmise what actually had happened. He had won a great victory, a victory that had taken him by surprise, and in the first flush he was radiantly happy. He had put up a valiant fight, but with *Tannhäuser* already simmering in his brain, with legend and myth beckoning him on,

he became conscious that his future lay, not on the knees, but in the hands of those half-gods around whom and across whom, in more ways than one, in music, in symbolism, and in grim reality, the Argument was to be settled.

Rienzi was a Victory: but other hands had forged the Weapon.

CHAPTER SIX: SCHNABELEWOPSKI[1]

MOZART'S period might, in musical terms, be called the season of the Tonic and Dominant. *Rienzi* was charged, loaded, with the Chord of the Diminished Seventh, "mit so getadelten, verminderten Septimen-Accord-Musik," as Wagner said of passages in Spontini's *Vestale,* and Weber's *Euryanthe.* But he was a great offender, if not a greater than they, for the Chord had a doubtful and ambiguous reputation, almost "a thing of naught," but he stuck to it throughout, and "put it in its place" appropriately in the Venusberg music in *Tannhäuser.* When he arrived at *Tristan,* the Chord of the Noble Ninth was enthroned.

So *Rienzi* was popular after all, in spite of its having been constructed on so large a scale that only the widest opera-house could accommodate it. Now, however, it had to be brought within reasonable limits so as to suit the capabilities of the smaller houses. We may presume that the absurd "Pantomime" had to disappear, and that the Ballet, part of the music of which was old material written at Riga, was kept within bounds.

The success of the opera rapidly spread and managers with an eye on the financial side became alert.

[1] The legend among seafaring men of a phantom ship was used by Heinrich Heine in his *Memoiren des Herrn Schnabelewopski.* Upon this Wagner, with Heine's permission, is said to have constructed his libretto. We are not concerned with the controversy as the source of Heine's story.

Berlin, which had been "considering" *The Dutchman* for several months, could not come to a decision, and reluctantly surrendered the score after giving Wagner unnecessary trouble to get it back. Besides, there were inquiries about this unknown German composer, so Wagner tackled the matter himself with his *Autobiographical Sketch* which appeared early in February, 1843, after the first performance of *The Dutchman.*

Owing to the dilatoriness of the manager of the Berlin Opera, little more than four weeks were available for the rehearsals of *The Dutchman,* and the first performance was given on January 2, 1843, in Dresden, with Wagner at the desk.

Opera on the scale of *Rienzi* or *The Dutchman* depends as much upon what is seen as upon what is heard. The most dramatic situation in music and poetry can be swept aside into the regions of the absurd if it relies upon mechanical effects. The machinist—not the poet, not the composer, not the singers, not the orchestra—the machinist alone has supreme control and responsibility. Wagner with his pictorial imagination, visualized ideal productions, but with all his knowledge of moving human beings about the stage, he did not reckon with the movements of inanimate objects, such as towers that were to collapse, swans that were to swim, landscapes that were to glide, great halls that were to be brought to earth. The most ardent admirer, the most instructed in Wagnerian drama, well versed in what he is hearing and seeing, is just as full of apprehension, as much

"in an agony," as Wagner himself must have been, lest an "effect" should not come off. The impression of the first act of *Siegfried* is lost if the machinery fails, if the pull on the bellows and the flare up of the fire are not synchronized, if the anvil splits before it is touched.

In one direction Wagner's stage sense was amazing: in another, the greater, he was a child with a doll's houseful of toys, or a Noah's Ark. And yet Noah, judged by legend, was by no means the least of stage-managers that the world has known. Only in two works did Wagner stand alone—in *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*. In the rest he was at the mercy of the machinist, and by the works of the machinist he stood or fell. He had not grasped the great principle that the eye sees more quickly and is more rapidly impressed than the ear that hears, and the lumbering shipping on the stage diverted the attention from the accompanying music.

He who would ride the high horse must pay heed to his mounting.

To inadequate rehearsals must be assigned the failure of *The Dutchman*. Wagner, who later complained that one rehearsal of not altogether unfamiliar works was insufficient for a concert of the London Philharmonic Society, had imagined that a new and difficult grand opera with special stage machinery could be got up in a month. The audiences fell off, and only four performances were given, although the work was in demand elsewhere shortly after. Twen-

ty-two years were to intervene before the opera was heard for the fiftieth time in Dresden.

No one more than Wagner was aware of the fiasco, yet his overscrupulous biographer, Glasenapp quotes a letter written by Wagner after the third performance, in which he speaks of his "brilliant success." In *My Life* he gives another side to the picture. "The management was compelled to revive *Rienza* in order to maintain my prestige; and the triumph of this opera compared with the failure of the *Dutchman* gave me food for reflection."

Wagner's self-revelations in *My Life* were often contradicted by what he said in his letters.

No! The opera creaked; the sea was calm and the ship swayed mildly. The storm was on the wrong side of the footlights. In another letter to the old chorus-master, Fischer, written ten years later, he let himself out on the subject of the machinist, whose clumsy and dull production was "grenzenlos," or as we would put it nowadays, *per chiasmum,* "the absolute limit."

Those who attended the performances in the interests of other opera-houses, must have seen that it was not the music that was at fault, but the mise en scène, and that with ordinary care and attention to detail the opera would succeed.

The music, in fact, and the dramatic texture were far removed from anything hitherto conceived. Wagner had the audacity and the courage to be original, and it was precisely because of these qualities that the

musical world was to be divided into two bitterly hostile camps—those who shrieked against heresy and apostasy, and those who welcomed release from the stale conventions of "opera" with its artificialities and incongruities. Things were to be as he engendered them, not sterilized by passing through the fallow brains of others.

Meanwhile events were moving in a direction which were to have far-reaching effects upon Wagner's fortunes. One of the two conductors of the Dresden Court Orchestra had died, and influence was at work to secure the vacant appointment for him. There was no secret about it: his somewhat disingenuous plea that "the decision came as a kind of surprise" has only one interpretation. He was seeking, at the time when *My Life* was *written,* not *published,* that is, in 1869, to reconcile his action as a revolutionary in 1849 with his oath of loyalty in 1843, so as to convey the impression that this court appointment was thrust upon him. Take the dates. The first performance of *The Dutchman* was given on January 2 : three days later, on January 5, he broke off in a letter which he was writing to his sister Cæcilie with the words, " this moment I am interrupted by the Privy Councilor's lackey with a summons to attend him this very morning," and resuming the letter he makes it quite clear that the " summons " had to do with the vacant post, for he enters fully into details.

On February 2, in the Committee Room of the

Court Theatre, he went through the solemn ceremony of being sworn as Royal Saxon Hofkapellmeister for life.

Wagner's " surprise " reminds us of the pious ejaculation in St. James's Park of Mr. Gladstone, hoping that *if chosen* to fill high office he might be a fit and worthy vessel, while all the time he had in his pocket the document summoning him to be sworn in!

Wagner's acceptance of the appointment, however, was contingent with his being given a free hand and official support in the reorganization of the Royal Kapelle, and he stated his conditions in a letter which he sent to the Intendant an hour or two after the interview of January 5. The Opera administration, therefore, had a practical scheme to consider. It was this, probably, that had weight and gave him an advantage over the other applicants.

After having taken the oath of allegiance as an official of the Household, he had an audience of the King who was friendly and well satisfied with his new Kapellmeister. Of Wagner's sentiments towards the Throne we gather little. Court etiquette was to him a state of bondage, and he disliked ceremonial in actual life as much as he loved it in his processions and pageants on the stage. There was so little of the courtier about him that he grudged paying for the uniform which he had to wear on state occasions. It at least would have made him a less conspicuous object than the grotesque *travestie* in which he chose at times to array himself.

When the appointment was announced, carrying with it, as everyone knew, a fixed salary, Wagner's creditors began to press their claims. The sky was darkened by the wings of vultures (Geier—a homely ring about the name) screaming for spoil. Into the tangle of his finances we need not enter; few men were less reticent than he; few more unblushing. Let that suffice.

The Dresden performances of *The Dutchman,* unsatisfactory as they were, had not stood in the light of the opera elsewhere. On June 3 it was given at Riga, with Dorn as conductor. He appears to have taken great liberties with the score, which was so disfigured by interpolations and cuts that a fresh copy had to be made.

Two days later Spohr, then in his sixtieth year, twice Wagner's age, and with a European reputation behind him, produced the opera at Cassel, where he was musical director. Undoubtedly he had been struck by the merits of a young and comparatively unknown composer and had given him his opportunity.

Dresden returned the compliment by rejecting Spohr's latest opera. Of Wagner's account of this in *My Life,* p. 406, it might be said that " the lady doth protest too much, methinks." He asserts that it was Reissiger's turn to "accept and produce a new work," but that he himself, in studying the text and score, was horrified to find that it was not what the maestro had represented it to be. Wagner, then, admitted that he had seen the work. Was it in the

least likely that after his letter to the Intendant about the reorganization of the Dresden Opera, he was to have no voice whatever in the choice of works? No matter what the policy of the Opera was, there was no excuse for treating a man in Spohr's position in a fashion that would cause him to take umbrage.

Wagner's attitude towards other composers was singular. He was partial to those who were dead. Those who had the misfortune to be alive, to be committing the unpardonable sin of writing music, were handled none too gently. His intolerance blinded him to the fact that national tradition and broad patriotism could be just as confident and strong in others as in himself, and that a new idiom in music as in language was not to be assimilated, as it were, at the word of command.

To take a step forward, we may ask what there was to be gained by his unmanly and ill-mannered references to Gounod? It was after the émeute in Paris against *Tannhäuser.* A society had been formed for the production of serious music, independent of the theaters. Gounod's capacity as secretary was referred to as "pedantic zeal," discharging his duties with "unflagging and nauseating garrulity," and in the next sentence but one he says, "With Gounod alone did I still continue on friendly terms, and I heard that he energetically championed my cause in society....As an acknowledgment of this advocacy I presented him with the score of *Tristan und Isolde,* being all the more gratified by his be-

havior because no feeling of friendship had ever been able to induce me to hear his *Faust*," which he called "Kokotten Oper."

When reading what Wagner tells us about others we cannot suppress the feeling that what he allows us to know is only part of the whole story.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TANNHÄUSER

INTERVENING between the *Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* were works which engaged Wagner as a creator and an adapter. In the first instance the result was *The Love-Feast of the Apostles, a pièce d'occasion,* performed on July 6 by a large chorus and orchestra in the Frauenkirche of Dresden. Its points of interest to us are that were we to hear it to-day for the first time we might be tempted to say that it was the work of a student who had heard *Tannhäuser* at some time or other, and remembered vaguely the cadences. The full score contained a serpent, not then obsolete as it is now, four bassoons, four trumpets, and four timpani, in addition to the usual orchestral force. Towards the end there is a tune in Wagner's less well-considered style, but his dramatic sense could not be suppressed, even in the church, when the orchestra suddenly burst in after a chorale-like theme, sung by a section of the Chorus placed high up in the building.

In contrast with this was his rearrangement of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis,* a work said to have been a favorite with the Saxon King. (In parenthesis it may be asked if Friedrich August was in sympathy with the Bourbon cause in France. His wife was a grandniece of Marie Antoinette. We know that the Saxons first sided with Napoleon in the War of Liberation, and then deserted him at Leipzig. Gluck was a protégé of Marie Antoinette, and when *Alcestis*

was about to be performed for the first time in April, 1776, she distributed among the audience gentlemen of the Court who were invited to clap their hands at certain passages, on a sign being given. (This was the origin of the *claque*.) So Wagner took Gluck in hand. Of the 300 pages of the score, at least 200 were "piously retouched," according to Ellis. Glasenapp, quoting the manuscript copy now preserved, is more direct, for the entire opera seems to have been rewritten and recomposed and reorchestrated. This was not all. Not only did he recast the French text into German, to the great advantage of the work, with German singers to perform in it, but he actually introduced a new character, Artemis, to "improve" the plot and round it off.

It is necessary to indicate these drastic changes, for Ellis, anticipating adverse criticisms of what some might call Wagner's "vandalism," attempts a defense, if one were needed, by quoting as a precedent Mozart's having "refurbished" Handel's *Messiah*. But the cases are not identical. All that Mozart and Franz did was to supply "additional accompaniments," a very different matter from what Wagner did for Gluck. When the *Messiah* was given some time ago, with the original scoring reproduced as closely as possible, the result was an experiment of antiquarian rather than of artistic interest. Those who would protest against the omission of one or of many redundant bars and superfluous explanations in Wagner's latest period may be left to themselves

to decide whether or not his treatment of Gluck was an "indiscretion."

During this Dresden period Wagner's brain was intensely busy, searching for dramatic themes. Historical figures kept intruding themselves, only to be thrust aside as too suggestive of the operatic pose, with the hero and heroine flatly contradicting one another to the same tune. So we have texts like *Die Sarazenin, Barbarossa,* and others with a similar tendency, while in the background, in the shadowy past of German folklore and legend, faces would show themselves for a moment, as yet too dim to be recognized or assigned their part in the mythology of the North.

It was a Teplitz, as we saw, that Wagner sketched the scenario of a drama on the subject of the *Venusberg,* afterwards known as *Tannhäuser.* In this he combined legend with history, dovetailing two unrelated incidents, and adding fresh material of his own. The conception had passed through a long incubation. It may be said to have begun when Richard as a lad was reading Tieck's *Story of Tannhäuser;* a later stage was reached while in Paris, where he came across some book on the lines of the Grimms' *Deutsche Sagen.* It was further advanced by his studying a poem, *Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg,* so before he left Paris in 1841 "situations" were developing vaguely in his mind. It is probable that with his faculty for dramatizing everything, even his own life, he had the dramatist's vision, and saw

his scenes with his characters, while waiting to hear them speak.

On his journey from Paris to Dresden in 1842 he caught a glimpse of the Wartburg, and further on of the Hörselberg, the view of which so impressed him that when later on the scenery for *Tannhäuser* came to be prepared, he was able to describe it in detail to the scene-painters.

It has just been said that the drama was composite. Close to Eisenach, in the Thüringian Forest, are two ranges or heights, each of which has a part in the place of action. On the Hörselberg tradition has situated the Cave of Venus into which she lured Tannhäuser. Not far off is the Wartburg with its castle, built in the 11th and 12th centuries. (Luther's connection with it will be remembered.) Here, again according to tradition, the Contests of Song were held. But it is a historical fact that the famous minstrels, Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschinbach, and others, visited the Court of Hermann, the Landgrave of Thüringen, and these three are characters in the music drama. Tannhäuser, it is said, is identical with Heinrich von Ofterdingen, who appears in the *Krieg von Wartberk* Saga; his romantic visit to Venus, with the usual consequences, is recorded. It will be clear that Wagner had ample material at hand from researches into old German folk literature, and out of the combination of tradition with the fact he constructed the dramatic idea of Redemption through Purity.

The plot is so well known that it needs no elucida-

tion here: there are no cross-purposes, no complexity. The drama is for the most part "exterior" and visual. What of it that is "interior" is the contrast between the types of Venus and Elizabeth, unlicensed love opposed to purity and devotion. Wagner had not yet reached the point where nearly all the drama is "interior," where the audience should profess a liberal—Wagnerian—education before it can grasp what is going on.

This "Redemption" idea was to become an obsession. It, and "Renunciation" of *something* prevailed throughout his works. In reference to the *Dutchman* Ernest Newman pithily asks,[1] "Is there no 'redemption by woman's love' for anyone under the rank of captain, or are the men, by being drowned and done for once for all, freed from the uncertainty that attends the heavenward journey of 'the glorified forms of Senta and the Dutchman'?"

While in the *Dutchman* the "interior" idea was the redemption by love of a doomed mortal—and there had been attempts to read something of the kind even into *Rienzi*—Wagner made this definite statement: "If there is one poetic theme expressed in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin,* it is the high tragedy of renunciation, of well-motived and finally imperative, alone-redeeming abnegation of the will. It is this fundamental note that gave my poem, my music, that hallowing [Weihe-consecration] without which

[1] *A Study of Wagner,* p. 20.

they could never have possessed any really moving power."[1]

But this was written—in a letter to Rœckel, in 1856, eleven years after the first performance of *Tannhäuser*. Wagner had been reading Schopenhauer more than was good for him.

After all, these themes were not exclusively Wagner's; they were as eternal as the hills: but when we come to study them in his own case, may they not, in some respects, have been thrust into the foreground by way of atonement for, or justification of, the discrepancies in his own private life?

In music he was the greatest that ever lived; would that he had held his tongue and that his ink had run dry!

His *Tannhäuser* was a compromise, albeit a splendid one. Despite his gibes at pot-pourris of Overtures, he held his audience by the calm and noble tread of the main theme, repeated again and again while the curtain was up, with its arresting harmonies and unexpected modulations. When he chose to be diatonic he could be beautiful, but when he provided stretches of melody, with constant repetition of the words (repetitions which were unnecessary, for he as "poet" could have supplied fresh lines), when he wrote those set "numbers" dear to singers, he was imperiling his artistic conscience by a concession here and there.

The first performance was given on October 19,

[1] Ellis, ii, p. 64. Glasenapp, ii, p. 67.

1845, and appears to have been a succès d'estime. The work was too long, and to keep the audience waiting twenty-five minutes between the first and second acts, and half an hour between the second and third was not quite the surest way of conciliating even the most well-disposed admirers. The scenery for the second act, besides, had not arrived, and what there was at hand was bungled. It is difficult, therefore, to accept what Ellis called "the unparalleledly [*sic*] sumptuous mounting" (die kostbare Ausstattung . . . eine noch nie gesehene Pracht) in view of the fact that the scene of the second act was an old friend, recognized as having done service in *Oberon*. One device is of interest to us. When Elizabeth disappeared up a winding path and was seen again and again, figures resembling her, but diminishing in height, gave the effect of distance. In *King Arthur*, at the Lyceum, Irving produced the opposite effect by making children pass across a "bridge" in the extreme background, replaced by taller children crossing a nearer bridge, so as to prepare the entrance of the girls in the scene of the Queen's Maying.

In Dresden the audiences fell off for the second performance a week later. Wagner himself said that the theater was nearly empty, but public interest deepened on repetitions of the work, till it became established in the repertoire.

Still Wagner was not satisfied. With all the experience that he ought to have gained from the shifts and changes and cuts in *Rienzi* and the *Dutchman*, one would have thought that by this time he

would not have left a stone unturned so that *Tannhäuser* went without a hitch, but from what we read of these performances we are forced to the conclusion that either he or the stage-manager or both were hopelessly incompetent. Wagner was to take long to learn his lesson, and in the end he never wholly learned it.

Although the drama was given eight performances between October, 1845, and January, 1846, and was received with growing enthusiasm, Wagner complained of "the public's defective understanding of his drama." He spoke of "the gnawing consciousness that a large portion of the applause was due to a mere misunderstanding, or at least a thorough defective understanding of my real artistic aim."

Full houses—regularly repeated calls for the composer—what more could a man want? Not the least of many Wagnerian problems is how Wagner was able on this and on many other occasions to know that his works were misunderstood. The Dresden audiences must have been amazingly obtuse if the only way they could show their lack of intelligence was by vehement applause. It was scarcely gracious to cast aspersions upon the audience when the Administration, of which Wagner himself was by no means the least important member, was responsible for everything that went wrong.

The action of *Tannhäuser* has worn a little thin; it was an attempt to challenge the fashion of the day; it reiterated faults which Wagner, with that forget-

ful mind of his, was only too ready to denounce at a later date in those who fell out with his opinions. But whether he wrote for himself in the secret of his heart, or played to the gallery now and then, he played—unconsciously too—to Immortality.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SWAN

THE Royal Library in Dresden must have been a godsend to Wagner in his studies of the old German Sagas. As a court official he would have privileges denied the general public, with access to the rarer books not to be trusted in the hands of the casual reader. It was here, in the person of the librarian, Grässe, that he was to find the first of the many commentators on his work.

Grässe's pamphlet appeared in 1846, dedicated to "his dear friend the Royal Saxon Court-Kapellmeister Richard Wagner," with the title, *Die Sage vom Ritter Tannhäuser,* a work of research due to the "high-poetic" text of Wagner's *Tannhäuser.* The second edition came out in 1861 with the dedication suppressed, and the hochpoetisch text had become "a canting tinkering" (frömmelende Verballhornung). Perhaps Grässe had carried his investigations a stage further than Wagner's and had made fresh discoveries in the intervening years: perhaps Wagner had been none too civil: but it was the Revolution of 1849 that caused the breach, for Grässe, a Hofrath and Royal Librarian, by abiding by his oath of loyalty, could not in justice and truth be called a "turncoat," as Ellis translates Glasenapp's "widerspruchsvolle," "full of contradictions."[1] The gar-

[1] This is one instance of many in which Wagner's English biographer-in-chief has misled the student by an inapt epithet. Wagner's part in the Revolution will be discussed in Chapter IX.

ment was more appropriate to the other court official, the Royal Hofkapellmeister.

Wagner struck a rich lode in the German Middle Age of fiction and romance with their tincture of history, and he worked it faithfully and laboriously. It was no small achievement to isolate, as he did, from a mass of irrelevant and often contradictory material the pure ore from which he fashioned *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal.*

But as he never could be satisfied with one work only in hand, he turned, after the austerities of *Tannhäuser,* to the project of a light opera, which eventually became the world's possession in the shape of *Die Meistersinger. Parsifal* was of the same branch as *Lohengrin,* and it was as well, perhaps, that it, like *Die Meistersinger,* was set aside for the moment for more mature thought.

The Knight of the Swan appears in various legends and in various guises. Wagner's idea, however, was not so close a composite as *Tannhäuser* was. The lore of the Trouvères and their mediæval Chronicles passed through that alembic, his brain, to be distilled and shed forth as the clear and limpid stream which we find in *Lohengrin.* His poem was not an adaptation, though here and there, as Kufferath points out,[1] there are direct textual borrowings—for instance the Farewell to the Swan, "Flüg dînen weg wol, lieber Swan." It was a reflection, a mirror, as it were, of salient incidents, assembled

[1] Maurice Kufferath: *Le Théâtre de R. Wagner—Lohengrin:* third edition. Paris, 1891, p. 69.

(to borrow a term from mechanics) for dramatic purposes.

The research to which Wagner devoted himself, even with the much-slandered Grässe at his elbow to find him fresh clues, must have been enormous, and we can but think that, remote as its bearing was on immediate studies, there was not a little of the shadow of *The Ring* flitting across his mind.

Those who put on one side and ignore the Wagner, the book-worm, the pamphleteer, the librettist, the controversialist, must admit that, but for these characteristics, somewhat shallow in their literary value and pretentiousness, the world might never have known the thing that will outlive all that he put into words . . . his music.

It is no part of this essay to do more than record him in his surroundings, in his difficulties and flights of imagination. But we may look back for a moment and consider this wayward, headstrong, this too often discourteous person, elbowing his way in the firm belief that what he thought "must be."

Still he was far from the achievement of his purpose in *Lohengrin*. Years of exile were to hold him, incredulous, from hearing this work, but their durance could not have bowed him to the breaking point, for in them there lay the marvel, if nothing else—the marvel of *Tristan*.

LOHENGRIN

It was at Gross Graupe, a small village midway between Pillnitz and Pirna, not far out from Dresden,

that the music of *Lohengrin* was sketched. Wagner worked backwards, beginning with the third act, which contains the main theme, but owing to interruptions connected with his official duties it was spread over six months, from September 9, 1846, to March 5 in the following year. After this he went on more rapidly: the first act was drafted in four weeks, and the second, the longest, in eight. The Prelude was dated August 28, 1847. To finish with our dates, the full score was ready by the end of March, 1848, the band parts copied and paid for, and the work accepted for production in Dresden, but at the end of the year it was withdrawn. We shall see why presently. Liszt gave it its first performance at Weimar with makeshift mounting on August 28, 1850. Wagner saw it for the first time in May, 1861, in Vienna, and it was not till July 27, 1894, that it was put on at Bayreuth. From the intervals between these dates it might be inferred that *Lohengrin* was long in gaining a hearing, but in the end it proved to be the most popular of all Wagner's works.

In more senses than one it was to mark a crisis not only in music, but also, and with weightier consequences, in Wagner's life, freedom and release in music—then banishment.

We have seen the sources from which Wagner derived his *Lohengrin.* Various commentators have pointed out a curious affinity between it and Weber's *Euryanthe,* and it has been asserted that Ortrud, who has no place in the *Swan Saga,* was sug-

gested by the character of Eglantine in Weber's Opera.[1]

As one of the official conductors of the Dresden Opera, Wagner was naturally familiar with every detail of Weber's score: it was he who was instrumental in having Weber's remains removed from London to Dresden for reburial, and for this ceremony he wrote a funeral march on themes from *Euryanthe*. In the course of his studies for *Lohengrin* he was doubtless struck with coincidences, but these did not affect his music, which was planned on a scale emancipated from the bondage of opera that was "Grand." He had this great advantage that he could fashion his characters as he chose, within limits; he was not at the mercy of unwieldy and straitlaced librettists, but with that dual faculty of his he could fit the musical phrase to the text, or make the line march with the rhythm of the theme. The older form of recitative was vitiated by the practice of the singer, who took his own time about it and chose to dwell upon a note rather than upon a word. Wagner's reform in this direction was to insist on the declamatory portions of the opera being sung in strict time, and required the closest attention to the rhythm of the text, to which the music gave character and expression.

[1] See Kufferath's *Lohengrin,* p. 139 ff., where he quotes E. Reyer as having pointed out that though the two works are derived from different legends, the characters and situations in each are almost identical. Lichtenberger concurs: *Richard Wagner:* third edition; Paris, 1902, p. 125 *n.*

This had a curious result. Of the 266 pages of the piano score there are only *nine* in triple time —96 bars in all, a little longer than the Prelude— less than ten minutes in three and a half hours of common time. It is singular that Wagner did not feel the urgency for changes in the time signature, or he may have had a wholesome fear of being parodied on some " orgue de Barbarie " as the Italian operatic airs were.

But he gave character also to the instruments. This was not entirely an innovation, but his treatment was. He gave groups of instruments an individuality which fitted in with the dramatic situation.

He, as it were, dramatized the orchestra: the various characters were as much in the orchestra as they were on the stage. In this there was undoubtedly some monotony, just as the incessant use of the tremolo in the strings made for staleness and sterility of invention. But Wagner was so enamored of his " poem " that every word had to be set even when he was at a loss for music, and had to cling to that lost soul of harmony, the chord of the diminished seventh, the use of which, as we have seen, was unforgivable when in others' hands.

But while in *Lohengrin* he cast a new light upon the treatment of a musico-dramatic subject, it was in his Prelude that he broke fresh ground. The declared enemy of Overtures of the pot-pourri style, though with true Wagnerian inconsistency he wrote them himself, he enunciated a new principle by treat-

ing the Prelude as a self-contained symphonic movement, confined to one theme and its development.

No short work of modern times has been seized with greater avidity by the descriptive word-painter than this Prelude. The purple ink has been poured out in bucketfuls. But if any work spoke for itself —the Descent of the Grail—surely this did. Here was no echo of another mind: it was as if some new sign had appeared in the firmament of music.

Lohengrin was to prove the turning-point in more ways than one. It and *Tannhäuser* had shown him a highway along which he, with his special gift of thought as composer and dramatist, could proceed, avoiding the footprints of the upholders of all that was conventional. It was a turning-point, too, for he had reckoned on a first performance at Dresden, which was refused.

But in 1848 the Chancelleries of Europe, including that of Saxony, had other things to attend to, more important than Wagner's petition to the king for a rise in salary. The reply to this, leaving just a little to be read between the lines, did not err on the side of generosity. There must have been some reason for keeping the purse-strings tight, we are not told. But Wagner, as a member of the Household, known by sight and by habits to hundreds of Dresdeners, could not evade the eyes of those who watch with jealousy the conduct of Court officials, and his dossier may not have provided nice reading. At this period a man who set out to reform anything, even under the guise of such an innocent and sec-

ondary matter as a Royal Opera, was looked upon as one brandishing a lighted torch when all Europe was a powder magazine. We may feel certain that there was little of Wagner's private affairs that was not fully—buchstäblich—entered in the books of the police.

The political trend that the sleepiest, overworked Court Chamberlain could have detected in *Rienzi* could not by the wildest stretch of imagination be discovered in *Lohengrin.* Yet *Rienzi* was being performed while *Lohengrin* was thrown out after having been accepted and the band parts paid for.

It was not music that was at the root of it: it was Wagner himself. He felt assured, but a trifle sooner than the world was ready for him, that, unsatisfied with creating only music, it was his mission to create a New Republic, but politics of the day and hour are not based upon a profound knowledge of mediæval romances. The cold steady finger of history is laid on map, on realm, on landmarks, on dynasties. So whatever the reason, after December 28, 1848, Wagner's name vanished from the bills of the opera at Dresden, till October, 1852. Why?

Reckless as to his oath of loyalty, forgetful of those who had given him harborage, he entangled himself and others in the toils of politics, without appreciating their fatal drift. His *Lohengrin* went to the wall, that wall where he, according to all accounts, should have stood beside his betrayed "friend," Rœckel, if the sentence had been carried out.

IN Germany a period of comparative tranquillity followed the risings of Leipzig and Dresden in 1830. But the shock of the French Revolution of that year was to be repeated in February, 1848, with a ferocious sequel just four months later. Once again the tide was set towards a form of liberty which, from a constitutional beginning, was to lead the way towards national unity. The example of France strengthened the views of those who held that the time was at hand for a riper and fuller measure of political and social freedom. Apparently it needed a revolution, preferably in some one else's country, to call attention to grievances in one's own.

While in France the crises were short, it was different in Germany with its aggregation of states with their varieties of constitutions, forms of government, customs, traditions, even dialects. The many-headed state had as many tongues as heads, each clamoros in its demands.

The Berliners staged a small revolution of their own in March, 1848, the chief incident in which was the flight of Prince William of Prussia, afterwards the first German Emperor. His consort, Augusta, faced the mob, but never forgave or forgot his unprincely act. Seventy years later this propensity for running away broke out as a hereditary taint in his grandson.

Riots were frequent in these distracted times. In

Bavaria King Ludwig was infatuated with a dancer calling herself Lola Montez, who became in Munich the storm-center of intrigue and corruption. This was too much for his people, but it was not on grounds of virtue that they demanded her expulsion, but rather because of her influence over the King. The "Lola Ministry" was a byword. With grace that became him as poet as well as king he abdicated. History was to repeat itself in the case of *his* grandson, Ludwig II, whose devotion to Wagner led to protests on the part of the Court, and the retirement of Wagner from Munich. Wagner himself was a marked man, not alone in music, but much more in the books of the police, and it was not safe for a mere lad of a king, notoriously unstable, to shelter a man who, known through his actions and writings, might sell the pass at some impulsive moment, blind to the consequences. We shall return to this in Chapter XV.

It is upon Dresden that we must now concentrate our attention. Here the events in Paris were analyzed and their outcomings discussed. Among the prevailing influences in Saxony under King Frederick Augustus II were discontent bred of famine, and press censorship. These affected in different ways two strata of society, the agricultural class and the enlightened. At the same time there were too many princelings exercising feudal rights, and the Court was over-crowded with officials. The policy of "*Verbot*" was drawn too tight and was cutting further than skin-deep. It was far into men's minds. The

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proposal of an "Imperial Constitution," *Reichsverfassung,* commended itself to a party opposed to the narrow expediences of a tax-inflicting government. It is not a little strange that such mild and reasonable demands as reform of the civil and criminal code, trial by jury, freedom of the press, civil equality—above all, demands for a nation in arms as opposed to a national army, should have been resisted.

Wagner accepted the appointment of Director of Music at the Opera in the hope of projecting his ideas towards unity in performances. He, and all but a few dilettanti and critics, saw in opera a bastard form of entertainment, in which the singers had to be provided with parts for the display of their voices. It was nobody's concern what the opera was about.

But he was not like his old teacher Weinlig, who had reformed his, Richard's, musical thought so imperceptibly that his pupil was blissfully ignorant of the change that was being wrought. Instead of burying his sting in a handful of roseleaves, he brandished it nakedly in the face of Baron Lüttischau, the Opera Intendant. This personage, surrounded as he was by notables bristling with stars and decorations, was not to be intimidated by a little man of thirty-four, without even a "*von*" to his name. Sympathetic at first, the Baron, irritated by Wagner's importunities, took refuge behind his official duties, and the composer followed suit behind his.

At this time Wagner had on his hands his four early operas, and beyond Dresden his only hope, Leipzig, was under the control of Mendelssohn, who

no doubt was writhing with the memory of many a Wagnerian pin-prick, if so gentle an expression conveys the meaning of what must often have been a cruel jab. Disheartened by his failure to have his suggestions carried out, though, as we have seen, he had no scruples about "touching up" and even altering Gluck, he retired into himself, in sympathetic converse with his deputy conductor and friend, August Rœckel. Rœckel had had his own disappointments. He had to stand by and witness his operas supplanted by works of inferior merit, and having more than a streak of the rebel in him—having seen in Paris, when of the age of sixteen, just as much of the Revolution of 1830 as was healthy and safe in those days for a lad to see—he brooded with Wagner over his grievances.

Heedless of consequences, he went too far and was dismissed from his post. He had rushed into print with his *Volksblätter,* a weekly paper in which he showed himself as unhandy with the pen as he was with the bâton. But in the background there was one, expert with both, to wit, Richard Wagner.

The desire cannot be set down as illaudable that Wagner identified himself with ideas of reform—that is, as far as his own theories went. But in Dresden there had arisen a Society, the *Vaterlandsverein,* whose motto was "The constitutionally expressed will of the people is the highest law."[1] In name it breathed of patriotism, but it was not exactly the

[1] Somewhere we have seen it put as "Vox populi suprema lex," which is just what it is not.

kind of patriotism upon which the government smiled. At first its objects seemed harmless enough, but the drift towards Republicanism became inevitable. Rœckel joined the *Verein,* and shortly afterwards was followed by Wagner. Both had fallen in with a Russian, Bakunin, whose nationality alone made him suspect. Wagner, although holding an appointment at Court, was drawn into the inner circle, taking part in meetings at which highly inflammatory discussions were held. His reforms for the theater had been innocuous enough on the surface, but gradually he widened his horizon and became a contributor to Rœckel's paper.

Rœckel was militant: his "Nation in Arms" was finer in conception than a "National Army," but his aim was purely local. For while the citizen had the fullest liberty to live where he liked, he could not escape the meshes of the military net spread over and around the state in which he was legally domiciled. Still, by means of his paper Rœckel was able to further his propaganda, and after a brief period of arrest, he succeeded in getting himself elected a Deputy.

Meanwhile Wagner had been thinking out things. His was to be a Utopian state, which was to serve as the pattern, the *Schablone*,[1] for all states, preferably

[1] *Schablone* is a Russian word, originally used in architecture, and denoting the repetition of a member, such as a molding. Then it came to mean the repeating of a design, *e.g.*, by means of a stencil. Equally it can be applied to that kind of music which affects a formal, stern, and often a sterile construction.

those in which the German language heralded his own message from every point of the compass.

His conception was made known at a meeting of the *Verein* in the form of an address which he had taken the precaution of having printed—in galley proof probably—so that none of the pearls of his eloquence should be lost. This address had for its subject the relation of republican efforts to the kingship. We do not know if secret agents were present; we do not know if next morning a domiciliary visit was paid to Richard, dragged out of bed and in perplexity as to the most suitable garment for a police interview ; but we do know that in a letter to the Intendant, dated four days later, he attempted to explain, in that involved and interminable style of his and his alone, that while he was down on monarchy he was all for upholding the King—whatever he meant by that. In fact he hedged. Instant dismissal did not follow. The probability is that though the Court circle was thirsting for Wagner's blood, the wiser counsel prevailed of leaving him alone but keeping an eye upon him. Thin-spun and narrow as the thread might be that tethered him to the Throne, it still held, despite the strain, but his creditors took alarm. If Wagner continued to toy with politics the thread might snap, and with it his pay, and the little cloud of vultures appeared in the sky. The season was to be made glorious by the summer sun of Liszt. But Liszt seems to have been in need of a little of the summer sun himself. How the debt was wiped out is not known.

Passing over for the present the musical activities of Wagner during the autumn of 1848 and the spring of 1849, we come to the events which were to turn the tide of his affairs in directions far beyond his wildest dreams. Political movements were thick in the air: the *Reichsverfassung* had become popular, so popular that civil war looked imminent. The Government took the step of prohibiting a demonstration in favor of the "Imperial Constitution" and the people rose.

Before this, however, the members of the *Verein* had begun to realize the insecurity of their position; even their necks might be in jeopardy, and warrants at any moment might arrive. Rœckel accordingly put a frontier between himself and the authorities by going to Prague for safety, and it was to him in Prague that Wagner wrote a letter. It was found on him when he was arrested and was to prove an important *pièce à conviction.* The letter was dated from Dresden, May 2, 1849. Glasenapp calls it "a letter of enigmas." Those who wish to exonerate or to minimize Wagner's part in the "Rising" can, if they please, blindfold themselves to the "inwardness" of the letter which has been pronounced to be genuine by Wagner's executors. Clearly it was a letter in code, and a clumsy one at that, in which a commonplace and innocent-looking expression was agreed upon as substitute for a word or name that might be loaded with danger to writer or correspondent. In any case it spelled disaster to the pair, and it is not fair of Glasenapp to say that "it was most culpable

of Rœckel not to have destroyed it at once." Why? In the "Authorized English version by Wm. Ashton Ellis of C. F. Glasenapp's *Das Leben Richard Wagners,*" it is difficult to discriminate between the accent of the one and the other, to know which is the voice of Jacob and which the hands of Esau. But the fact remains that this "echte Briefe," this genuine letter, made the writer of it the "most culpable," and incriminated Wagner far more than Rœckel.

The "Rising" began on Thursday, May 3, when the Communal Guard attacked the Arsenal and Royal Palace. Barricades were thrown up in the narrow streets in true revolutionary style, copied from the French. Wagner was seen crossing the Alt Markt, not far from the Kreuzthurm, which he climbed, determined to see what was going on, or more likely to be in a place of safety.

The following day the King and Queen were in flight and government in Dresden was at an end. Wagner is reported to have cheered the mob, but his most significant act was his adventure with the posters. He had bills printed with the words, "Are you with us or against foreign troops?"

These, it is said, were to have been shown on the side of the barricades which the Saxon troops were facing, the "foreign" troops being Prussian regiments marching to the aid of the Saxon King. By some mistake they were shown on the wrong side, facing the mob.

The poster has been interpreted in Wagner's favor, but its question was applicable to either party. All

depended on what was meant by the "You," and the "Us."

By May 5 the Royal troops held all the important points. Wagner was wise to put himself out of range at the top of the Kreuz Tower, and commanding a splendid view of the proceedings, as well as providing an ideal position for G. H. Q. Here he could be in touch with the leaders and be able to direct operations, if he chose. Of these matters we are told nothing whatsoever. But at least we do know that he was supplied with snuff and wine by his devoted wife, who threatened to shut the house if he did not come home. So perched, he spent the afternoon and night of May 5, and the morning of the next day. Across the roofs he could see the Opera House in flames.

But he did not lack congenial company, for among the people was a schoolmaster called Berthold, with whom he lost himself "in an earnest philosophical discussion which extended to the widest spheres of religion." The pair took cover behind a mattress. Wagner continues: "The Prussian sharpshooters were posted on the distant tower of the Frauenkirche, and had chosen the height occupied by us as their target. At nightfall I found it impossible to make up my mind to go home and leave my interesting place of refuge, so I persuaded the warder to send a subordinate to Friedrichstadt with a few lines to my wife, and with instructions to ask her to let me have some necessary provisions." Then he mentions "the continuous rattle of the Prussian shot as it beat against the Tower walls."

As Wagner has gone into details, perhaps we may be allowed to do the same. In the first place there could not have been much risk in leaving the Tower, or Wagner would not have sent the messenger to his wife. If there had been danger Wagner might have been sending the messenger to his death—but the messenger "got through."

The Tower was 312 feet in height, but as Wagner says he was under the big bell, he could not have been at the top. The Tower of the Frauenkirche is 280 feet high. The distance between the two Towers is a little over 600 yards.

The Prussian troops were armed with the "needle gun," which they had adopted in the year 1842. Its range was only 400 yards, and it was inaccurate beyond 200. A shot fired from the Frauenkirche, therefore, could not have reached Wagner's temporary abode. It would fall short by over 200 yards. If the Prussian sharpshooters did let off some rounds, they were merely wasting ammunition. It is of interest to note that the gun fouled very rapidly, and in case of accident it was *fired from the hip*.[1]

To return to the narrative. By this time Rœckel had arrived.

There had been more than a splutter of lead in the streets. Rings of tow steeped in pitch were made, ready to fire important buildings. This crude invention was but the forerunner of the incendiary pastilles which were to make havoc of the glories of art, of

[1] Greener, W. W. *The Gun*, p. 680. London, 1896.

learning and of architecture on the stricken fields of Flanders. It was said that a bomb was found in Rœckel's house.

Minna seems to have been the one person who had kept her head. She knew one side at least of her Richard: his volubility was incomprehensible, but she was shrewd enough to see that though he talked endlessly about grandiose theories or projects while she mended his socks or tatted (did she tat? Why are the letters silent on this burning question?) he was a man to be cared for and mothered.

So down Richard climbed from his Tower of Irony after the Six-Day Revolution, and was bundled into the diligence for Chemnitz, to the house of Richard's sister Clara, married to Mr. Wolfram.

Here let it be said that times without number Minna's "Hausbesorgerei" prevented Richard from "understanding" his wife. There is ample evidence that she "looked after" him, in spite of more than justifiable outbursts of jealousy, as sedulously and as valiantly as those cooks and housekeepers whom not a few distinguished persons have chosen to sit opposite them at the dinner table.

The next day, May 8, Richard returned to Dresden, but on a whispered hint he ran, and ran away.[1]

[1] Glasenapp says (ii, p. 7) that the flight from Dresden canceled Wagner's appointment as a matter of course; but that when the writ against him as a revolutionary was about to be issued, a member of the Household suggested that any action should be based on a clause which held that absence from the City without leave was a breach of the contract. This was quoted as an instance of

Brother-in-law at Chemnitz shrank from harboring in these inflammable days a piece of tinder like Richard, and passed him on to Liszt, who from his upbringing and experience was equally uncomfortable with such a guest near him, especially as the warrant for arrest was on its way. So, a few days later, Wagner smuggled himself into Swiss territory under an assumed name. Rœckel, left to his fate, was sentenced to death, but was "pardoned" by imprisonment for thirteen years.

Into the labyrinth of Saxon police procedure it is unnecessary to enter, or even to cross its threshold. But there was the warrant out with the name of Herr Königlichkapellmeister Richard Wagner. If he had been innocent in a political or in any other sense, what a glory it would have been to have stood in the dock beside his dear friend Rœckel: what capital would he not have made out of his once at least having been sentenced to death, and then amnestied!

The good will of friends is in conflict with the coldness of fact, but the looker-on, amused by the special pleading on the one side and the judicial investigations on the other, can only conclude from the efforts of each that whatever moral or physical courage Richard Wagner possessed, he kept it for his music.

So into Switzerland he went, crossing Lake Constance on May 28, landing at Rorschach, and then to Zurich.

Here we leave him in sanctuary, but not for long.

the King's good will towards Wagner, but the writ was issued all the same.

IT was thanks to Minna that Wagner was able to escape. When the police arrived with the warrant for his arrest, she had the wit to ask for a delay of three days before it was to be put into execution—that is, three days from May 16, 1849—and strange to say this request was granted. After the 19th, therefore, anything might happen in the confusion, but as we have seen he was successful in getting away.

There may have been misgivings in his mind lest the Swiss authorities might take a severe view and be coerced into extraditing him; the legal position might prove a nice one. But he secured an unfailing ally in Jakob Sulzer, a young lawyer, not thirty years of age, who held a municipal appointment in Zurich. In the years that were to come, it was he who was to prove the most practical friend that Wagner ever had, and through him many a financial difficulty was to be smoothed over. On this occasion he was able to obtain Wagner's passport to Paris, dated May 30, 1849, and Wagner arrived there on June 2 or 3. The step was taken by Liszt's advice, not wholly, perhaps, in order to secure sympathy for his music; it was more likely that Liszt hoped to put him out of reach of the arm of the law. But Wagner with his excitable nature was unable to rest owing to his recent experiences.

There was certain grim irony in his going to Reuil, where Liszt's secretary, Belloni, had a small property

near La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, probably now a heap of broken bricks. Little did Wagner dream that not so far off, in less than seventy years the terrain would bear—but only for a time—the names of those half-gods of his whom he had dug out of the Nibelungen-lied, and who, through his music, had been made glorious in every German nursery. In comparison the Dresden affair was no more than the whisk of a mule's tail.

But even in his Tower he had come through quite enough for a man of his temperament and imagination, so June saw him back in Zurich, where he consented to settle awhile. To be sure, there were differences with Minna, but her attitude was not incomprehensible or unreasonable. After six years of comparative comfort, with steady pay assured, she saw herself once more in sordid surroundings, with the mean and petty shifts, the humiliations. What business was it of that scatter-brained husband of hers to go mixing himself up in a political mess which could end only in one way? Why did he throw away a sure appointment merely for what to her was a string of empty words? Had he never thought of what it all meant to her? She was then in her fortieth year, scarcely fit, mentally or physically with that heart, to renew the struggle with which she had been all too familiar.

The differences were "composed"; indeed, they were all that Wagner did compose at this time, for from the completion of the score of *Lohengrin* in March, 1848 to 1852, no music was written.

But there were compensations in words, and the period was one of great activity in which he deluged paper—and his friends—with ink: theories, explanations, opinions, commentaries, criticisms—till his intimate circle stood agape at the copious outpourings of the man.

It must not be lost sight of that the German musician in those days was by no means the educated compeer of the English musician to-day. There were most certainly exceptions. Weber, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Schumann, Berlioz, had quickness of pen, plying an alert machine while Wagner lumbered along heavily, censoriously, sometimes anonymously, nearly always self-gloriously and dogmatically.

In an earlier chapter reference was made to some of the conditions which favored the growth of Teutonic philosophy. By the year 1848 it had become fashionable to indulge in transcendental flights of thought. Even in England Carlyle was penetrated in no small measure by the desire to solve the insoluble. Darwin was yet to be adopted by the German mind on more sublunary grounds. There was much talk; conclusions were few.

Not to be outdone, Wagner, in one of his more likable, more amusing poses, turned philosopher. He could not resist doing what others were about, but whatever judgment may be passed upon much of his *Prose Works,* he was right in the main in explaining the purpose of his music. Whether he wholly succeeded in explaining himself is another matter.

Of the authors of this period was Ludwig Feuer-

bach, who had published works on *The Philosophy of the Future, The Religion of the Future,* and *Death and Immortality.* Wagner was intrigued: had he not in his mind something or other " of the Future " too? He must look into this.[1]

Feuerbach's influence over Wagner has been disputed. If it were worth while, some student with his life before him might undertake the formidable task of collating the two authors, and settle this burning question, but it is to be feared that his researches would lead him into a cul-de-sac.

Having borrowed half of one of Feuerbach's titles for his *Art Work of the Future,* Wagner, as his " grateful admirer," dedicated his essay to him. But as Finck dryly remarks in a footnote, "In the reprint this dedication is significantly omitted."[2]

On reading the essay, Feuerbach may have discovered some " coincidences," or even " appropriations," and he may have remonstrated. Twenty years later Nietzsche was to assert that Wagner in his *Beethoven* and in other works was borrowing from him.[3]

But Wagner could modify his convictions. In his *German Art and German Policy,* first published in 1867, he allowed himself to say of the Hegel-Feuerbach German Philosophy,[4] that it is " a system which

[1] Ellis points out (iii, p. 20) that George Eliot, under her own name, Marian Evans, translated Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity.*
[2] Henry T. Finck: *Wagner and his Works,* London, 1893, i, p. 290.
[3] *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence:* London, 1922, p. 72.
[4] *Prose Works,* English text: iv. p 53.

has succeeded in so incapacitating German heads for even grasping the problem of Philosophy, that it since has ranked as the correct philosophy to have no philosophy at all."

Finck's general commentary is that "it is to be regretted that Wagner ever came under the influence of this nebulous writer [Feuerbach] on social and religious topics, as it led him to speculate and write on various abstruse subjects in the old-fashioned German metaphysical style, which is anything but entertaining or instructive, as it deals chiefly with conjectures, theories, and random assertions, concrete facts being scornfully ignored. . . . Yet there are some delightfully luminous pages, while parts of *Opera and Drama,* are, in form and substance, among the most fascinating and important contributions ever made to musical history, criticism, and æsthetics."[1]

Perhaps if Wagner had been more reticent he might have "arrived" sooner. Music that is incomprehensible and provocative becomes still more so when supported by provocative language which at least is readable though often obscure.

In the present work it would be out of place, even were there space enough, to discuss these Essays of Wagner at length. Reference, however, must be made to them as forming a part—and that not a small one—of his astounding mental activity. If the world did not see eye to eye with him upon questions

[1] Op. cit., ii, p. 290.

about which he was ill-informed and contumacious, it could not deny him his mastery in the realm of sound.

But Zurich left him unsatisfied: in February he was off again to Paris, goaded by that οἶστρος, that gadfly, as Prometheus was, of which, for all his boastful talk about Greek drama, he probably had never heard. But he impressed bystanders. They, in their ignorance, were no better or worse off than he was. The Teutonic nature of thought was so involved as to invest a mode of expression with a complicated manner of speech. It was unable to say what it had to say without a multiplicity of subsidiary clauses. Of his intimates at this time, Liszt and von Bülow alone had claims to a liberal education. We are told that in the belongings of one of his friends, Ernst Kietz, there was found a copy of *The Art-work of the Future,* with autograph inscription, uncut and unread. But Kietz may have heard all about it so often that he did not need to look into it.

From Paris, on March 14, 1850, there was that sudden dash to Bordeaux which ever since has kept pens and tongues busy. Wagner's own explanation may be dismissed: in his attempt to whitewash himself he only blackened his character a shade deeper. His official biographer, Glasenapp, (ii, 361–362) mentions Bordeaux once only. Ellis, now turned commentator (iii, 40), speaks of " a well-to-do connection of Frau Ritter's, a lady who had conceived a lively admiration for Wagnerian opera during a prolonged visit to the Saxon capital." Frau Ritter's elder son, Karl, had been caught in the Wagnerian

net, and his mother had suggested making Wagner an allowance, " Jahrgeld," Glasenapp called it, using inverted commas. This was to be a joint contribution, we are told, on the part of Frau Ritter and the lady in Bordeaux, but Wagner's account put a different complexion on the affair, and Ernest Newman, by a discreet analysis of dates, shows here, as in other instances, the discrepancies which we would expect, those challenging asterisks which bespatter any page devoted to Wagner's adventures.

After staying about three weeks in Bordeaux, reading aloud, teaching La Bordelaise how to interpret piano works, but begging her not to sing in his presence with her sharp, shrill voice—"sein scharfer, schriller Falset-Tom. . . erschrecht mir so sehr "—he returned to Paris, Minna thinking that it was about time for him to leave a family which he had just got to know. His stay could not have been agreeable to the husband of La Bordelaise, if we are to judge by the cool way in which he assumed later the management of Otto Wesendonck's estate, and by François Wille's protest that a man had the right to be master in his own house.

From Paris Wagner went to Montmorency, determined to break with Minna, and feeling certain that the lady in Bordeaux would join him somewhere. He spoke of traveling in the East, and for this he raised money from the mother of the lady. Back again in Paris, he persuaded his friend Kietz to lie to Minna about his movements, then off to Villeneuve on the Lake of Geneva.

The Bordeaux adventure now reached Act II, with the mother in the cast, and the husband armed with a revolver. Wagner, with his customary interference and insolence, wrote to him, " endeavoring to make him see matters in their true light " and informed him that he would come to Bordeaux and thrash the matter out—the matter in question being, in Wagner's eyes, the utterly ridiculous idea that a man should prevent his wife from running away with some one else. If the pair had met there doubtless would have been some thrashing, but the husband ignored the letter. As a lawyer he had no intention of allowing himself to be involved in a quarrel with a man who had given him direct hints that his presence in his own house was embrarrassing. Besides, there was his young wife to be considered and safeguarded.

On his arrival at Bordeaux Wagner sent a letter to the husband at nine in the morning. This letter, too, was ignored, but late in the afternoon Wagner was summoned to the police station, ostensibly to account for an irregularity in his passport, but admittedly because of information lodged by the husband. He was ordered to leave the town, but was granted two days' grace. This gave him an opportunity to write to La Bordelaise a letter of explanation, which letter, he asks us to believe, he was able to place in the lady's workbasket, entering and leaving the house without meeting a soul. Julius Kapp, quoted by Ernest Newman, suggests that Wagner must have been wearing the Tarnhelm, which rendered its wearer invisible.

But this was not the end, for twice again came awkward reminders of the episode. La Bordelaise felt it right to explain to Karl Ritter, whose mother had introduced Wagner to her, that she had discovered enough about Wagner to drop him for good. To this Wagner made the retort discourteous by bringing charges wholesale against the Bordeaux household, calling them "conspirators," forgetting that he himself had plotted an abominable betrayal, which fortunately failed.

Some years later the episode cropped up again, when he made the astonishing discovery that Minna had known all about it, but had held her tongue. With this in her mind, who can blame her for her attitude towards Mathilde Wesendonck whom he was to meet within the next eighteen months?

In July, 1850, he returned to Zurich with Karl Ritter and his "Jahrgeld," to take up house again with Minna. It was a *ménage à quatre,* for Natalie, Minna's daughter, but living in the belief that she was her sister, was the fourth. Karl, however, could not endure the perpetual squabbles that went on, and as the first performance to *Lohengrin* was to be given at Weimar by Liszt at the end of August, he went thither to report.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GÉNIE OBLIGE[1]

IN the autumn of 1840 Wagner met Liszt for the first time and the meeting took place in Paris, where, as we have seen, Wagner and his wife were living under deplorable conditions. There could not have been found two men, ultimately to be united in the strongest bonds of friendship, who showed such differences of character. Each was to attain a high destiny; each was to be distinguished in himself; and each was to win distinction through association with the other.

Liszt, then twenty-nine years of age, born in 1811, two years before Wagner, had made the Grand Tour of music as the world's greatest pianist. He was welcome in every Court in Europe; from his ninth year he had been in the public eye as a genius, and although, on his father's death in 1827, he had to sell his piano to defray the funeral expenses, he was never reduced to the terrible straits that Wagner had to face during that first stay in Paris.

By this time—1841—he had won independence—of a kind. Contact with the great names of those days, his own upbringing, had thrown him as a man of the world into high relief against the blurred

[1] Génie oblige—the words occur in the obituary notice that Liszt wrote about Paganini, when the great violinist died, in 1841. "Let the artist never forget that although one says 'Noblesse oblige,' infinitely more than Nobility 'Génie oblige.'" Julius Kapp: *Franz Liszt.* Berlin, 1909, p. 51. It is a pity that Wagner never grasped the significance of the phrase.

background of musicianship as it was then. Almost from his earliest recollections he was a personage, and he lived up to that quality and dignity throughout his life.

A strange figure, this; half Franciscan friar, half gypsy: the ascetic, the selfless, the musician wandering in quest of a mate to share his ideals, only to find a barrier which he could not over-ride. Devout in one sense, yet scarcely living in a manner which his moral theology would have countenanced, he could make a claim to constancy, a disposition which in these facile times was held to be ridiculous.

He began his love affairs with a Carolyne, a pupil, Carolyne de Saint-Criq, when both were in their seventeenth year. He had just lost his father; she, her mother. He was fated to end his career with another Carolyne, the Fürstin Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein. As for the first, the aristocratic father showed the music-master the door and bundled the young lady off to a convent; as for the last, we shall come to her presently.

It is now clear that there was not any close intimacy between him and George Sand, but it is quite likely that at one time she had him in that black eye of hers. This Diana of the Crossways, if ever there was one, was the *chère amie* of Alfred de Musset when Liszt first met her, in 1834. She was Aurore Dupin, born in 1804, and descended from the great Marshal Saxe, whose proclivities alike in war and in love were notorious. If the ramifications of her pedigree are traced back, she can be shown to have had

kinship with—the Hohenzollerns! Married to a scamp, Casimir Dudevant, Aurore, shortly to elope with Jules Sandeau (hence "Sand"), in the end became a devoted admirer of Liszt, but nothing else. She comes into this story only because of her strange attachment to a lady whom she had never seen, the lady that was to become the mother of Liszt's children.

This was Marie, Viscountess de Flavigny, whose father had married a daughter of Simon Moritz Bethmann, a rich banker of Frankfort, himself descended according to one account from Schimsche Naphtali Bethmann, according to another from the Bethmann-Hollweg family, a name which was to gain some notoriety in our own time. Liszt met her in Paris, after her marriage with Count Charles d'Agoult, with whom she now was on bad terms. She was accomplished and had been writing under the name of "Daniel Stern." Berlioz and Liszt frequented her salon, the one attracted by her spirituality but noting her lack of sincerity, the other self-possessed and cold. This was more than this other Diana could stand. But she did not, like another[1] in a later episode, whip out revolver or talk of poison:

[1] In a letter of May 10, 1871, to Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein Liszt mentions his persecutor by name and gives his opinion of her character, ending, "Veuillez, par charité chrétienne, garder tout ce que je viens de dire pour vous seule," (Please, for Christian charity's sake, keep what I am telling you to yourself.) So now we have the lady's name in cold print, but always mentioned to Carolyne under the seal of secrecy. See *Franz Liszts Briefe,* Sechster Band, Dritter Theil, pp. 234, 299, 316, 330.

she had a better weapon—divorce. The loss of a child touched Liszt; he felt being dragged through sympathy into a love adventure, so the friar that was in him gathered up his habit and fled the scene. The Countess, having obtained her decree, was after him with tons of portmanteaux and hat-boxes. Never was there any Diana so completely equipped with clothes.

Then the children: first, Blandine, on December 18, 1835, afterwards married to Émile Ollivier, the statesman who played a great and small part before and after the débâcle. Then Cosima, born December 25, 1837, long-nosed and pert, inviting, as one would say of a naughty child, a good slapping. Last, Daniel, his father's pride, more like Blandine, but too heart-breaking in health to stand up to an insanitary world. He was born on May 9, 1839, and died in December, 1859.

This was the establishment which Wagner was to encounter. A rabble of young children of a world-renowned artist: comfort, warmth, and himself standing in worn-out boots that left damp marks on the parquet floor.

The meeting was not propitious. Wagner hated virtuosi, especially those who drew crowds and made money. Liszt, too, disliked the métier, but we may be sure that he would not give a sign of resentment at Wagner's criticism. Great as he was then, he came to realize that, splendid and supreme as his art was, the creator stood above the interpreter. He was to see himself in time as one in poverty—the friar—be-

side him who was to preach the gospel. The glory was to be Wagner's; the honor, Liszt's. Meanwhile we may touch briefly upon the subsequent events in his career, only less tangled than Wagner's.

He took the step of legitimating his children, but the liaison with the Countess d'Agoult did not last. The breach came in 1844. She was extravagant and there were scenes. Liszt, the gentlest of men, departed quietly, made arrangements for the children and ended it all, to resume his wanderings.

We now come to the other Carolyne. She was Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, born in Poland in February 8, 1819, and married in April, 1836, to an officer, Nikolaus Wittgenstein. She met Liszt in Kiev in February, 1847, when he was giving a series of concerts there. She was separated from her husband at this time. She invited Liszt to be her guest, so that he could work at composition, and he accepted the invitation. Carolyne had a daughter, Marie, whose tenth birthday came round during Liszt's visit. There were some little festivities, during which Liszt and Carolyne discovered that they were destined for one another. She persuaded him to give up his concerts and settle somewhere, he to devote himself to composition, she to devote herself to him. Weimar was the choice, and on Good Friday, 1847, the momentous decision was arrived at.

Liszt went to Weimar; she followed with her daughter. In less than a year marriage was suggested, but there were insuperable obstacles to divorce. The pair were strict Roman Catholics, and

their Church barred the way. It was true that by Polish law, the forcing a girl into marriage, as Carolyne was forced, constituted sufficient grounds for divorce, and there were even clauses in marriage contracts providing a loophole should a couple wish to separate. Indeed, as Adelheid von Schorn[1] pointed out, it was not unusual for a father to give the bride a slap at the altar, so that, were a separation demanded after marriage, the daughter could adduce this treatment in order to strengthen if not justify her case.

Liszt, however, was wedlock-shy, a state of mind which, considering the circumstances, it is difficult to understand: there were money complications and the guardianship of the child. Besides, there was the Russian grip.

At first Carolyne was well received in the exclusive circle of Weimar, and the little capital became the Mecca of musicians, artists, poets, and all who had attained to fame, as well as those who had not quite got that length. Liszt, now approaching his fortieth year, was finding peace. He reorganized the Opera, and was officially the conductor of the Court concerts. It was during this period that he gave the first performance of *Lohengrin,* in 1850.

The first five or six years were passed in great happiness, then the cloud burst. Carolyne was ordered to return to Russia. She paid no heed. She

[1] Adelheid von Schorn: *Franz Liszt et la Princesse de Sayn-Wittgenstein,* traduit avec autorisation par L. de Sampigny: Paris, 1905, p. 16 ff.

was afraid that she might be separated from her daughter, and that, once in Russia, she might not be able to obtain a passport to return to Weimar. Sentence of banishment followed, and her property was settled on her daughter. But this was not all. The Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar, sister of the Tsar, refused to meet her, although Carolyne had been received by her at Court constantly during the earlier years.

Liszt now had the bitter experience of having to see his brilliant and popular friend cold-shouldered by the community. From this time onward, for the last thirty years of his life, little rest, little joy were to be his.

He had yoked himself to a woman who was to be his *âme damnée* even more than Marie d'Agoult had been. The real Liszt only now and then was able to peep out from behind the ample crinolines and flounces of Carolyne. Later on, as we shall see, there was a Wesendonck who, thanks to Wagner's assumption of authority, was not able to call his house his own. In Liszt's case it was not his house so much as his mind that this masterful woman possessed. There was no escape. Even his correspondence had to pass her censorious eye, and there must have been many a passage inserted at her dictation; many, too, which she, Russian born and accustomed to Russian police methods, "caviared."[1]

[1] In the days of the Tsars, in newspapers entering Russia, articles and paragraphs which were prejudicial to the interests of the Government were obliterated by passing over them a roller loaded

We shall not ever know how far she influenced Liszt against Wagner, or how many of those long silences on the part of Liszt were due to her revising, supervising, or even suppressing what he wrote.

Then there came the blow—from his own circle, not from hers.

At the beginning of the year 1861 his second daughter, Cosima, then twenty-four years of age and married to Hans von Bülow, was passing through what we are told was a "moral crisis." We at least know that she was overmuch in Wagner's company. It was a complicated affair. Liszt the father, devoted at once to his son-in-law, devoted to Wagner who was under obligations to both and possibly to Cosima as well, found himself broken in faith. Deeply attached to the three, he could not in his soul and conscience put forward Art—any kind of Art—as a substantial excuse or plea. Dramatists have spoken of "the eternal triangle," but this, violating the rules, had four sides. Liszt must by this time have known the truth.

The Wittgenstein divorce question had come in sight again, with the decision of the ecclesiastical authorities in Russia to countenance it. The Vatican had yielded, and Liszt and Carolyne were in Rome for the ceremony of matrimony, on October 22, 1861. The church was San Carlo, where elaborate preparations had been made. But during the evening of the 21st, a message arrived that the Pope wished to study

with printer's black ink. Shakespeare used the word in a different sense.

the documents afresh, and that the marriage must not take place. This finally disposed of the matter.

While in Rome Carolyne sought the society of the clerical party, and became dévote, using her influence over Liszt to induce him to accept an appointment which would allow him to effect improvements in the church music. Three years later Carolyne's husband died and she was free, but she and Liszt had already gone through too much to take advantage of this opportunity. In the next year, in the last week of April, 1865, he received three minor orders, with the designation of "Abbé." It was not, however, his first experience of initiation: in 1841 and later in 1870 he took part in ceremonies as a Freemason.

What was in the mind of this austere reserved man when, on his last public or semi-private appearance, on the eve of his preparation for his clerical vows, he played Weber's *Introduction to the Dance* and his own transcription of *The Erlking?* It was at the Barberini Palace in the midst of a brilliant company —strange prelude to the rite of the morrow.

What was it that brought him and Wagner together? Nationality, perhaps; a common tongue; more likely Liszt's success as a pianist, and the possibility of Wagner's impounding for himself some of that talent which he felt Liszt was frittering away on empty fantasias out of the patchwork arias and scenas of ephermeral composers. The first meeting was not auspicious. Liszt was wasting his sweetness on the desert air; he would be better employed on the

desert air that was to be Wagner's for the most of his life.

Never settled at that time in one place for good—the nomadic life, the homage, dangerous lures—Liszt, though unspoiled, was disillusioned. At the age of thirty he had undertaken responsibilities which, even in a legitimate union, were heavy enough in any artist's career.

There was Chopin at his elbow, coughing out his heart, with a strange unlovely being watching over him—Chopin, in his own way as much an artist, more fine drawn perhaps than Liszt with his steely brilliance at the keyboard. What George Sand was to him was not quite what the Countess d'Agoult was to Liszt, two liaisons which may be left to others to unravel. Chopin slipped away gracelessly, leaving, behind him his children, his Nocturnes . . . to be caressed or slapped on the keyboard by the generations that came after him.

And Wagner, out at elbows, standing by.

A curious pair: Liszt never sparing himself to help others, witness his transcription of the *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz in order to make it known, his playing a work by Pixis with Beethoven's name against it in the program in the hope of gaining appreciation, an experiment safe enough in those days when Beethoven's works were not too well known. As a contrast there was Wagner, never backward in helping himself . . . to the brains and pockets of others. It was the real Wagner who well and truly guessed, "Liszt is more to me than I to him." From

what we now know, there was no need to follow the expression with " ganz natürlich."

But there was a reaction of which neither seemed to be conscious. Liszt considered himself the servant of the public. He had a gift, developed by painstaking assiduity, and there was no reason why he should not come to terms with his admirers for its display. Wagner despised the person who monopolized the attention of the audience, forgetting, with his blazing inconsistency, that the characters in his music-dramas, nay, even himself, were just in the same position. But in his heart of hearts it was gall that he had not Liszt's efficiency, when the pianist in an evening could secure what would be to Wagner a year's income.

At the age of thirty Liszt was a made man. Wagner at that age was in the making ; in the artistic sense he made himself; in the worldly sense he preferred to leave that duty to others.

What Liszt did for Wagner in good season and bad, all the world knows. What Wagner did for Liszt we shall never know. He clung to him like a leech. He drained him in musical ideas and in pocket till Liszt had to plead his poverty; he broke him by his treacherous betrayal of one of his daughters, and flung the gibe at him for performing a fantasia of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* on the occasion of a festival to raise funds for the erection of a monument to Beethoven. On both sides there was an error in taste, but Wagner might have held his tongue, for he himself had rigged fantasias against

his will, be it said, and for money, too, when in Paris for the first time.

There remains on record that for all his accomplishment as a conductor, for all his devotion and friendship, Wagner never once did conduct a work of Liszt's.

Small wonder then—"mir Liszt mehr ist als ich ihm . . . ganz natürlich."

Hapless Liszt, with a millstone around his neck in the shape of the turbulent loose-tongued mother of his three children—Liszt at that time the best-known performer in Europe, seized upon by the least-known composer, was between many, too many stools. Compromised at a time of life when a man, most of all an artist, living by his wits, should have had complete freedom, he found himself saddled not only with domestic cares, but also pledged to the cause of a man who, despite the glory of his music, was a relentless parasite. So if Liszt had to go out into the world with his fantasias on *Robert le Diable,* it was because the insatiable demands of Wagner drove him thither.

The effusiveness of the correspondence leaves us wondering at its sincerity, on one side, at least. Wagner complained that Liszt never wrote to him spontaneously. It was only after some long-winded epistle, in the style of a leading article, that Wagner dragged a reply from him, and then, as if to hint at brevity, it was in such short terms that Wagner manufactured a grievance out of it.

Liszt's nature was not armed for strife; not, at

any rate, as far as the world was concerned. The strife was for the music that was in Wagner—not for the man himself, for an abyss divided them. Wagner was too self-centred to take a hint, although before his eyes there was an example, unfailing in greatness and singleness of purpose. The things that were Cæsar's were never repaid, either in kind or in conduct. Throughout his life Liszt upheld the maxim that Noblesse oblige. For all his genius Wagner never discovered that Génie oblige.

. . . . .

The manner in which Liszt received the news of Wagner's death in Venice is described by Kapp.[1] He was in his study in Pest when his oldest friend there, Kornel Abrányi, entered and told him the news. Liszt did not look up, but went on writing quietly, and said, "Warum nicht gar." Still writing, he casually remarked, "I've been told dozens of times that he was seriously ill or dead. All nonsense." Even when the telegrams began to pour in, he was outwardly unmoved. He was specially asked not to come to the funeral, but from Cosima herself, his own daughter, the widow of the man for whom he had made immense sacrifices, not a syllable.

In the following month, March, he was asked to hand over all of Wagner's letters and papers in his hands. He refused. "On m'a demandé les lettres

[1] Julius Kapp: *Franz Liszt.* Berlin, 1909, pp. 518-519. The German means, "You don't say so."

qu'il [Wagner] m'adressa—j'ai répondu que je n'en liverai aucune."[1]

The last music that Liszt wrote was a bar or two of Sir A. C. Mackenzie's *Troubadour,* of which he intended to make a Fantasia.

His last word was "Tristan"!

[1] La Mara's *Liszt,* Siebenter Band, 4er Theil, p. 376: Letter 369 to Countess Carolyne Wittgenstein, dated March 6, 1883. (They've asked me to hand over Wagner's letters to me. I've replied that I will not give up any.)

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE MOST UNKINDEST CUT

ON April 21, 1850, Wagner wrote to Liszt that Lüttischau in Dresden had a copy of the full score of *Lohengrin* for which he had paid 108 marks, and that probably Liszt could obtain the copy from Dresden for the same sum. Liszt did so and was enthusiastic, the music was his chief concern, so he took all the rehearsals himself, and procured additional instrumentalists. But Wagner was asking the impossible on the small Weimar stage. It was not like the Dresden stage, of which he had had six years' experience. The equipment at Weimar was modest, and the machinists' problem too difficult. Besides, the opera was too long. Even Wagner himself realized that a section of Lohengrin's part in the third act would have to be cut. Only a tenor in the front rank, with the necessary physique could have carried it through, and Weimar, a small town off the main line, could not afford the highly paid singers that Opera Houses such as those of Leipzig and Dresden could. While Wagner was right up to a point in not considering his audiences, his knowledge of human endurance cannot be placed very high. He began to recognize the fact that, after all, audiences did count for support, and later at Bayreuth allowed respectable intervals for food and rest. He failed to see that the attention, which includes the interest, could not be kept on the stretch for nearly five

hours, and be as receptive at the end as at the beginning.[1]

We saw young Karl Ritter off to Weimar to attend the first performance. Thither were gathered the eagles—not vultures, this time. Critics and amateurs from all parts of Europe made their way, some to hail the new work, some to ban it, but all consumed by an eager curiosity. Wagner actually proposed to risk detection and be present in disguise. But Liszt was firm. Carolyne no doubt had a say in the matter, for a police visitation might implicate Liszt as an accomplice, and there was her own position to consider.

As the days drew nigh for the first performance, the clerk at the box-office pulled a long face: it was a bad time of year, the end of August, and the weather was fine. The local interest was so indifferent that the Grand Duchess, copying Marie Antoinette in the case of Gluck, instituted a kind of claque, more it is suspected for Liszt than for Wagner, by buying tickets and distributing them among the Court and her friends.

There were two dress-rehearsals—on August 26 and 27. Wagner's penchant for fire had no place in *Lohengrin,* but fire he had, real fire, for during the dress-rehearsal on the 26th the jail, not far from the Opera House, went up in flames. This looked

[1] It is unlikely that the most astute impresario or "producer" of to-day would allow a work to play for more than three hours—the time which is accepted by managers as the limit of an audience's attention.

a spontaneous act of homage to Wagner, who, with singular oversight, had not arranged a blaze in *Lohengrin*. Later on he was to make up for this untoward omission.

The reception was not enthusiastic. There were longueurs and possibly the audience had become wearied of the sameness of rhythm to which reference has been made. Musically, that is, orchestrally, there was no fault to find, thanks to Liszt, but whether the singers were in the front rank or not, the demands that Wagner made upon them were extravagant. It was as if an athlete, trained as a sprinter, were expected to last out the mile.

The performance had taken nearly five hours. The demand for cuts was immediate and urgent, but again the question has to be asked, Had no one the common sense to time the various scenes? Wagner had had three operas produced, each of which had to undergo mutilation, but in practical matters he was obstinate. Not a word would he sacrifice. To judge from the clamour that arose and the letters that passed, we may imagine Liszt sighing and wondering why he had been so complaisant as to produce the work. It was not a little pathetic that he, with all his loyalty and generosity, should have made it a point of honor to prepare for performance an opera which, with his experience, he must have known was far beyond his resources. Yet he carried it through somehow: he pinned his faith to the music, and for the sake of the music he overrode his better judgment. Splendid friend as he was to Wagner, he

would have been more splendid still if he had had the strength of character to say No when No was imperative. But too early in his life he had literally fingered his way to success; the gypsy blood in him knew only the adventure of to-day; yesterday was settled and done with; to-morrow he would take to the road again.

What Wagner called his " nicely calculated artistic texture " was all well enough in the study or salon, with a specially chosen group of ardent friends and worshipers; the bearers of garlands and incense might feel that they too were part of the ceremony and that the " artistic texture " was a tribute to their intelligence and superiority.

But Wagner misled himself. Out of that chaotic mind of his he had evolved the idea that the regeneration of the world was to be accomplished by Music. The public was to seek at the theater " not distraction but *concentration* " which last word he italicized. He goes on, " If you do not train the public to such an exercise of strength in art-enjoyment, your friendly zeal will spread neither my works nor my intentions. For a performance of their trilogies the Athenians sat from mid-day [*sic*] into night, and quite certainly they were nothing more than human: but what they were was active even in their enjoyment."[1]

In his terrible earnestness Wagner did not perceive the confusion of ideas. One can picture with bewilderment the faces of an audience at Weimar

[1] Glasenapp, ii, 371. Ellis, iii, 59. See also Appendix A, "Was Wagner a Classical Scholar?"

or Dresden, "concentrating" its mind upon "art-enjoyment," as if attending a public meeting on the Redemption, let us say, of the National Debt.

Wagner did not underrate his high mission: therein time has justified him: but he could not alter, by a stroke of the pen, the attitude of the public towards the opera house, and the public, too, could not be expected to throw out of gear a host of preconceptions accumulated through tradition and convention, taste and education. This new language was not to be acquired or understood by a flash of intuition. There are audiences which specialize: those who crowded the Lyceum in Irving's day were of a different mental caliber from those who flocked to the old Gaiety across the way, where it then was. Wagner was to have his own audiences in time, but if people did drop out during a performance, he surely had visible evidence that things were not right somewhere.

Besides, his references to Athenian audiences were wide of the mark. Not all had their mythology by heart. In *The Laws of Plato*[1] there is a description of how they behaved. There are copious references in the Greek authors to the conduct of the audiences, which Wagner, if the classical scholar that his friends, or rather his commentators, made him out to be, might have read in the original texts, or in translations, which is more likely, as he himself admitted.

But while his analysis of existing Greek dramas

[1] E. B. England: *The Laws of Plato,* vol. i, p. 407. The Greek text is in Book iii, 700.

was interesting, at least where the analysis was coherent, the analogy was remote. He seemed to be in search of a justification for the lines upon which he proposed to work, namely, the special design of *The Ring*. He thought that he had discovered his authority in the Hellenic Drama, without having studied the conditions which called that Drama into being. By recognizing its sublimity as a whole and by striving to emulate it, he imagined that his audience would accept his works on the same terms as the Athenians had accepted the works of their great dramatists, assuming the terms to be those of unqualified praise and profound depth of understanding. His assumptions, often gratuitous, were too sweeping; but the Athenian Drama was too solidly set upon foundations which had stood the test of time. It could not be shaken or transformed so as to fit in with any scheme of his own.

It cannot be questioned that he was well read in Teutonic translations and commentaries—just those commentaries which overwhelm a "rivulet of text" with a spate of explanations—and in order to display his knowledge he added his own waterspout. But it is difficult to understand why, if the printed word meant anything at all to him, he should have been content to leave the correction of the proofs of *Oper und Drama* to another hand, especially the most important and at the same time the most confused section. It would seem as if he were so assured of his opinions that it was immaterial how vaguely or obscurely they were expressed so long as they ap-

peared in print. Print was to him the very breath of his body. Wherefore there is not a little literary casuistry in the proceeding.

If Wagner had rightly comprehended the Athenian Drama in its golden days he would not have made the foolish comparisons to the disparagement of the Weimar audiences. With all his desire to have his *Lohengrin* performed, he did not see in himself the real obstacle to success. For his short- or rather his long-comings he blamed the audience. He was pitiless in his exactions. The singers had to be considered, but they had their moments of rest. With the conductor and orchestra, however, it was another matter. Miraculous as were his powers of detachment and concentration, he counted upon others being endowed with the same gifts. The demand for cuts was reasonable and practical from every point of view: it was as much the concern of those behind the curtain as of those in front of it. But he would have been wiser had he bowed to the judgment of men quite as experienced as himself, and not left it to later generations to carve *Lohengrin* according to their notions.

[Wagner's misconceptions as to what Drama was in Athens are discussed in Appendix A.]

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE RING AND ITS BOOK

I. CHRIEMHILDE

IN order to obtain some idea—but only approximately—of the ferment in Wagner's brain, we have to carry our thoughts to the period when he was Kapellmeister in Dresden, between the years 1842 and 1849, when for the first time—he was only twenty-nine when he was appointed—he was coming in close contact with men who had some claims to a wise and broad education.

Hitherto, and even at later stages, his ponderous volubility could impress only those of the operatic world, less well read than he, among whom he had cast his lot. But in Dresden as a Court official he was encountering men better equipped than himself, and his intercourse with them was beneficial. Besides, he wisely claimed the privileges to which his position entitled him.

The Royal Library, as has been pointed out, was a godsend. It was a kind of haven of refuge into which the tides of centuries had flung upon its pebbles the flotsam and jetsam of Romance and Myth, of Legend and tangled Story, all too waterlogged and splintered to provide more than a flicker for the beachcomber's hearth. But Wagner detected in these cast-up fragments the ribs and planks of many a founded Viking ship: their story still clung to them, and with the fire that was in his brain and in his

blood they lit up that flame which was destined to be the forge for *The Ring of the Nibelungen.*

Others had been over the ground before him but out of the crowded welter of manuscripts, dragged from garrets and muniment chests, to be thrust into print, analyzed and dissected *more Teutonico,* Wagner found the silver thread that through him was to be woven into a resplendent tapestried epic.

The time was at a standstill for his achievement. More than half a century earlier Chriemhilde had awakened from an age-long sleep, to be recreated by Wagner in the person of Gutrune.

It was in 1757 that attention was called for the first time to the wealth of Northern Mythology locked up in mediæval manuscripts, and the pioneer work was Bodmer's publication, *Chriemhilden Rache und die Klage* (Chriemhilde's Revenge and the Lament).[1] But the Teutonic cast of mind could not leave to one man so much credit of discovery, hence it was that commentator tumbled over commentator with translations and editions, accumulating "a whole system of antique Teutonic Fiction and Mythology."

Wagner had the rare faculty of being able to carry in his mind several dramatic schemes, and at the same time to have the self-restraint to withhold pen from paper till the material was ripe. Much as he may have treated his Kapellmeistership in Dres-

[1] Thomas Carlyle: *The Nibelungen Lied* [1831]. *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* vol. iii, p. 111.

den with scorn, it is undoubted that it was during the period there that he discovered the seeds of his greatest work. *The Ring, Tristan, Die Meistersinger,* and *Parsifal* all germinated in what he would have had us believe was inhospitable soil. We have already seen (p. 92) that Grässe helped him in his researches and, with so enthusiastic a reader, must have been only too willing to unearth treasure for him from the rough hoard. According to Carlyle, "the *Nibelungen* is welcomed as a precious national possession, recovered after six centuries of neglect, and takes undisputed place among the sacred books of German literature."

But before attacking *The Ring* Wagner had drafted, in July, 1845, a scenario of *Die Meistersinger,* to be laid aside for the moment, till, with important reconstructions and alterations, it was resumed seventeen years later.

While this plot was simmering, Wagner was struck by the scope provided by the *Nibelungenlied.* This colossal poem[1] of nearly ten thousand lines, told in thirty-eight "Aventiuren" or Adventures, was a mere fraction of a vast, "dislocated, distorted chaos." The edition that Wagner studied in the Royal Library appears to have been *Die Wölsunga-Saga,* translated by H. van der Hagen, an author mentioned by Carlyle. Incidentally the reference to this work shows us the light in which Wagner regarded his exile. In a letter quoted by Ellis (iii,

[1] In the "Reclam" edition, edited by H. A. Junghaus [? 1875] there are 2,444 stanzas of four lines each.

275) he actually asks Uhlig to obtain for him *from the Royal Library* a copy of this book, then out of print!

In order to see how *The Ring* refused to be crowded out of Wagner's mind, even though its progress was again and again interrupted, let us study the list of his compositions from the earliest record of his work on *The Ring,* taking them as far as possible chronologically, but without dates. The period covered is under twenty-five years.

Sketch of plot of *Die Meistersinger*
Subject of *Parsifal* considered
Text of *Siegfried's Death*
Text of *Young Siegfried*
Text of *Ring* published privately
Music of *Rheingold* scored
Sketch of music of *Die Walküre*
Subject of *Tristan* considered
Die Walküre scored
Music of *Siegfried* sketched
Siegfried, Act I and part of Act II scored
Text of *Tristan*
Parsifal considered
Tristan scored
Text of *Die Meistersinger* privately printed
Text of *The Ring* published as a "literary product"
Meistersinger scored
Siegfried, Acts II and III scored

Götterdämmerung scored
Parsifal text finished
Parsifal full score finished.

A list of this kind is not to be glanced at without an effort to grasp its significance. The manual labor alone was prodigious. Putting the creative part on one side as beyond our powers to fathom, and taking if possible the question of the orchestration by itself, we know that Wagner was not dealing with the simple instrument that had done noble duty in the past. Even in its quietest moments his had an intricacy beyond the reach of the older masters. A fraction of it would have been accounted a good life's work for most men.

After the performance of *Lohengrin* at Weimar, some project on the theme of the *Nibelungenlied* was in the air, and Liszt was anxious to secure the work. He knew that the character of Siegfried had attracted Wagner and a dramatic scheme was discussed, with the result that a contract was signed and fees paid in advance for a text on lines suggested by Wagner. But on looking more closely into the *Nibelungenlied* Wagner discovered that his first idea, *Siegfried's Death,* was something in the nature of a final Act, without earlier Acts to explain its raison d'être, and therefore he prepared the text of *Young Siegfried.* Even with this, however, he still felt an anticlimax, and very wisely and on purely artistic grounds asked to be released from the contract. Fortunately he

was at this time in a position to return the fees advanced.

Free to expand his work on the story that he felt needed amplification, he completed it by adding *Das Rheingold,* originally *Der Raub des Rheingoldes,* and *Die Walküre,* the other parts being *Der Junge Siegfried,* afterwards called *Siegfried* simply, and *Siegfrieds Tod,* afterwards *Götterdämmerung,* a title apparently suggested by van der Hagen's edition, to which reference has just been made. We are told that in the first sketch Wotan was quite in the background: would that he had stayed there!

The development of Wagner's idea has been told so often, and by much abler pens, that it is unnecessary to intrude further.

It was evident that a work of the dimensions of *The Ring* was no bagatelle for the ordinary opera-house, and Wagner was right, when, viewing his accomplishment in true perspective, he insisted that, if ever performed, it must be under his supreme control. There must be no interference by managers who had more than an eye upon the box office. It was repellent to him that audiences should be asked to pay to listen to masterpieces in music—an opinion not wholly commendable to his heirs and successors —so a kind of guarantee fund was instituted, by which subscribers, called "patrons," were entitled to "free" admission.

Parenthetically this was the nearest approach of Wagner's (if indeed he was aware of it) to the conditions that prevailed in the ancient drama in Athens,

when every inhabitant in the golden period was entitled to a "dole" so that he might have enough to pay for admission to the theater of Dionysus. The difference, it is almost needless to point out, lay in the state finding the coppers in the one case, while Wagner appealed to the individual for gold.

In the presentation of his gigantic work he was insistent upon details, many of which were completely lost from a scenic point of view. Although he said of *Rheingold* that it was "fairly rich in action," there are throughout *The Ring* passages which are "fairly rich" in inaction, passages which cannot be followed because of their involved and complicated argument. If it was to be "a fairy tale for grown-up people," in spite of the Second Act of *Siegfried,* the gossamer—it is the text that is being referred to—should not have been replaced by rude hemp or even by the golden rope of the Norns. When the "leading motive" system has been mastered there is a glimmering through the music that something has been said or sung which can be connected with the story. But the "poem" which Wagner, like the indifferent "poet" that he was, esteemed beyond reproach, pursues its tortuous course in labored periods, till the mind disregards the plot and the attention is directed to the music alone.

Narrative and dialectics which occupy so much space cannot rightly be called "action," and the serious student of *The Ring* confides the text to the study; the music to the concert-room. In the theater the partnership is utter weariness.

At this time of day the above sentences may appear "flat blasphemy" towards a work which has passed the Grand Inquisition of the civilized world. But there are matters to be considered which are of not a little importance. The *Nibelungenlied* had become a "precious national possession." It is more than a century since van der Hagen's version was published, and four-score years since Wagner came across the little book. There can be no overlooking the fact that at some time or other every German must have had acquaintance with the myth, and the influence of the music and the immense réclame in Europe and the United States made Wagner the most conspicuous figure in the world of art.

After Wagner—Germany: after Germany—the Germans.

It may be said that while Bismarck's work proceeded on interior lines, Wagner's was all exterior, more, perhaps, than he reckoned. It was the German people that he had ever in mind. Towards the throne, save that of Ludwig II, his attitude was opprobrious. Why he occasionally cast longing eyes on France, why he actually went the length of considering a residence in the south of France—these are questions which are not easily answered. He was too sturdily a German to conciliate by his art any people but his own, although he knew that he owed much to sympathizers and enthusiasts who were not of his own nationality, and who whole-heartedly accepted his work despite its unfamiliar theme and tone.

More than any statesman or soldier he helped his country. The pity is that that help was abused.

2. THE TEXT

Wagner was not dismayed by the immensity of the task which he was undertaking, but his friends had misgivings. A music drama on the scale of *Lohengrin,* expanded to four of like dimensions, with a text written in a new and unaccustomed style, was to mean years of labor for a very nebulous end—years, too, with no possibility of escape from the only too familiar embarrassments. Knowing their Richard and the sacrifices that they felt certain would be demanded of them, his friends, looking ahead, saw in prospect many rainy days, many lean years, for themselves.

Of the music of *The Ring* it is likely that the most lenient critic would feel inclined to eliminate many an extraneous bar, and as these bars, to put the matter plainly, are associated with superfluous talk, it is clear that their omission would help on the business of the drama and the music most gratefully.

It was not necessary that every character in *The Ring* should be card-indexed and orchestrally-indexed, with stale recapitulations as the drama moved onwards, repeating much that the audience had already known and grasped. Wagner thought so much of himself as a poet—an assumption in later days derided by men of his own nationality—that he plumed himself upon his everlasting readings of his so-called

poems. Some to-day rate these "poems" no higher than doggerel built up of synonyms picked out of the German equivalent of Roget's *Thesaurus*.

It was already remarked (p. 138) that he was content to leave the correction of part at least of *Oper und Drama* to Uhlig, and no doubt that satellite, that ring of our Saturn, must often have been hard put to it to know what to make of Wagner's manuscript. In order to say something, and keep on saying it, no matter how confused or irrelevant, Wagner poured out his opinions "on the boil," as it were, without the frigid and severe self-criticism that comes of after-thought.

Take just one matter, his discourse on "Accent." We find[1] the following. "He [the poet] will see to it that his coil of words is rid of that excess of auxiliary and explanatory lesser-words peculiar to the complicated phrase of Literature: at least so far, that their numerical bulk—despite the slurring of their intonation—shall not consume the breath in vain." There is more in like strain. Then we have: "A massing of consonants around a vowel, without any justification before the Feeling, robs that vowel of all emotional ring; just as a massing of side-words around a main word, when merely dictated by the meddlesome Understanding, shuts-off that main-word from the Feeling."

To put the "meddlesome Understanding" in its

[1] *Oper und Drama*, pp. 236-237: Second Ed. Leipzig, 1869. English translation by W. A. Ellis, *Prose Works*, ii, 257.

place, and for the sake of "clearness," I give the original text.

"Eine vor dem Gefühle durch Nichts gerechtfertigte starke Häufung der Consonanten um den Vocal benehmen diesem seinen Gefühlswohllaut eben so, wie eine bloss durch den vermittelnden Verstand veranlasste Häufung von Nebenswörten um das Hauptwort dieses dem Gefühle unkenntlich macht." What grammarian, what scholar, what philologist, can extract from this quotation one fraction of a milligramme of sense? Meddlesome might be the understanding, but muddlesome was the mind that left to poor Uhlig the ungrateful task of licking into some sort of shape this mass of incoherency. (The second German Edition of *Oper und Drama* (1869) runs to 350 pages in Gothic type. Uhlig should have died hereafter. He was only thirty-one when the end came.)

Does Wagner not give us in the passage just quoted an example of that which he condemns? And wherein is his grievance? It is not simply this, that his own mother-tongue is just that which "masses consonants" around a vowel? *Das Rheingold* is scarcely under way before Alberich is given lines in which clods of consonants have to be dug out before the vowel is reached, and this kind of excavation is evident by Wagner's plying the spade ruthlessly into the old and discarded system of alliteration which had served its time and had outgrown the needs of man and of the increase of his mind.

For all his vaporings about Greek prosody he was

in complete ignorance of accentuation in spoken Greek.[1] How the Athenian actors declaimed their lines is a matter for philologists. Certainly Wagner knew nothing about the theory of the Greek accents, why they were used, for what purpose, and for whose benefit. But if ever he read the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, about his study of which there are grave doubts, he would have met with a famous line deliberately alliterative in its scorn—a line which, wholly apart from music, he might well have taken to heart and pondered.

τυφλὸς τά τ' ὦτα τόν τε νοῦν τά τ' ὄμματ' εἶ[2]

"Blind" he certainly was not as to his "ears": not "blind" in his clear vision, looking forward for over a quarter of a century: but in his νοῦς—his "nous" . . .?

Wagner's appeal—it was too deep-rooted to be dismissed as a pose—was to a class of mind not concerned primarily with music. Thanks to his superficial and indiscriminate reading his own mind was a farrago literarum—a jumble of notions or ideas. He leaped at conclusions which had no clear logical development. That which he thought right was right. Those who challenged him were wrong.

His audiences, assembled to be swept away from mundane affairs by the witchery of his music, were

[1] With all the one-sided talk about his having had a "thorough classical education," I have come across only one Greek word, μέτρον (*thus*) in the *Prose Works*. See the Ellis *Translation*, ii, 241.

[2] "Blind art thou in thine ears, in thy mind and in thine eyes." *Œdipus Tyrannus*, 371.

not concerned with apparently profound, but for the most part shallow dissertations of no importance but for the music. Here Wagner underrated them. His music held the first place. It is inconceivable that any thinker, intrigued by Wagner's prose writings—amaze at the buckram philosophy which he erected against time-worn monuments—would have given a moment's thought to the gasps and gutturals of persons on the stage, so long as there was that miracle of sound floating upwards from the orchestra.

The ultimate issue of *The Ring* resolves itself into music and nothing else. Few are to be found among musicians who can tell what it is all about. Its music is too firmly established in the mind to be thrust aside now and then by pseudo-philosophic catchwords. Of Wagner we shall ever ask for music: what he talked about is mere wind. Wrong-headed in more than one direction, absolutely right in that direction which was his, and his alone, he came into his kingdom at last. Herein he was not like others, who, working like true artists in quietness, pursuing their ideal without clamor, erected their monuments through their endeavor and went to their eternal rest, unconscious that the slab over their grave was to be a milestone marking a journey accomplished, an end achieved, on the proud highway of their art.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE ZURICH PERIOD

I. WAGNER AND THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF LONDON

WHEN William Ashton Ellis penned his misleading chapters (Vol. V, p. 158) on the London Philharmonic Society he must have had in mind the musical repute of the society, not as it was in 1855, in the forty-third season of an unbroken series, but as it came to be during a later period when it was passing through dark days. If instead of raking through and resurrecting old criticisms and wasting time and paper in reprinting them by the yard, he had applied to the proper quarter, he would have been able, in a space of time not exceeding sixty minutes, to study the attitude of the society towards Wagner. The Directors' Minute Books, the copies of the letters to Wagner, the five, only five, holograph letters from him—one dated from Zurich on a single sheet of thin note-paper in tiny and delicate handwriting, with, strange to say, the British Royal Arms embossed on one corner—how did it get there?—these documents, as well as the list of orchestral players and financial details, would have saved Ellis a world of trouble, and incidentally his readers as well.

The invitation sent to Wagner to conduct a season was in the most courteous, the most magnanimous terms. Here was a society in "unmusical England,"

the only one in the world that had stood by Beethoven when he had fallen upon evil days, a society so far-sighted, so alive to what was best and most advanced in the musical world, that it went the length of holding out the hand of friendship and understanding to a composer who was still even as a prophet in his own country. It was grossly ignorant and unjust to insist, in the volume just mentioned, that a society which offered its hospitality to the leader of a new, and, as it then was, a revolutionary phase of musical thought, was obsolescent and moribund.

To those who had to investigate its past history it came as a surprise that in the year 1855 the Society had already in its Library the full score and band parts of the Overture to *Tannhäuser,* then, and for some time later the bête noire of most if not nearly all orchestral players.

The Wagner-Philharmonic correspondence has been mentioned. Its slenderness is due very likely to the fact that, once the preliminaries were settled, business matters were arranged by word of mouth. The Directors' Letter-copy Book, apart from the generous invitation contains merely notices of dates and hours of meeting, with a final letter of thanks.

As regards English, Wagner was illiterate, so we may assume that during rehearsals and interviews there was some one at hand to interpret. Foreign conductors who unhappily to-day visit our shores, who, too, have not taken the trouble to acquire the limited jargon of the orchestra, are worse off than

Wagner was, for our orchestras no longer are polyglot, but British.[1]

Although Ellis wishes to convey the direct opposite, there is no doubt that the society allowed Wagner the utmost latitude, but within the confines of its constitution. At no time of his life was he ever satisfied. No great man that ever lived was at such pains to manufacture unhappiness for himself. In connection with the society he wished to override tradition, and tradition, with all its failings, its side-issues, its stubbornness, has the awkward faculty of permanence. Wagner, ignorant of the high and laudable aspirations of the society, disregarded the fact that it was on his reputation as a composer and conductor that he was invited, and not as a manager to organize the concerts according to his own ideas.

From the first he adopted a hostile attitude. A little graciousness on his part soon after his arrival would have prevented difficulties, but instead of tempering the asperities of his nature, he accentuated them.

Ellis spoiled his case by contemptuous references to the criticisms of the concerts, indulging in personal

[1] That mirror of the years, *Punch*, has only three and a half lines about Wagner during his stay in London. The reference is to "The Music of the Future" composed principally of "Promissory Notes" (vol. xxviii, p. 127). This would seem to indicate that Wagner's presence was not attracting great attention. But in the next volume, p. 245, astonishment is expressed that the Philharmonic Society has actually appointed an Englishman, Sterndale Bennett, to succeed Wagner.

abuse of their writers, calling one critic a "contemptible bully" (V, 183) because he gave a mild description of what happened at a concert at which Ellis was not. But he unconsciously helps us when he points out that while the criticisms of the earlier concerts were "quite propitious and intelligent," "acute hostility" was manifested as the season progressed. Are we wrong in concluding that this change was due in full measure to Wagner himself?

His associates in London were men who understood his language—not perhaps his theories. From the first he was aloof. On his arrival on Sunday night, March 4, 1855, he was invited to a banquet of the Queen's Band on the Thursday following. Writing to his wife (*Richard to Minna Wagner,* vol. 1, p. 169), he said, "I declined with due thanks. In general I mean to abide by it: I conduct my concerts, but there's an end! These people shall see that I am even more of an Englishman than themselves."

The attempt failed. Not only was it Englishmen that he misunderstood but English audiences. He had stipulated that he was not to be asked to conduct concertos or isolated vocal works, but the Directors declined to make concessions, having in mind the type of program that was expected of the society. We know that Wagner hated the "virtuoso," and this may have been his reason for his conditions; but he had conducted operas and he could not plead inexperience with vocal technique, and besides he had time to study the scores.

From the first he was churlish, unsociable, and

disposed to create difficulties. Beyond what has been said above, the minute books do not contain a syllable in the way of criticism, though no doubt his policy and his manner were discussed again and again. At first there was nothing but good will on the part of the Directors: they were as anxious for Wagner's personal success as for the welfare of the society: in the words of the invitation, they wished the engagement to be " advantageous to yourself." They could not say more.

The prejudices and misstatements of Ellis are too flagrant to be passed over. In his quotation (Vol. V, p. 368) from Hogarth's *The Philharmonic Society of London,* published in 1862, there are interpolations in small type which are deliberately calculated to mislead. To make matters worse he says that Hogarth " writes with full access to documents since dispersed or made away with." This "made away with " is a conscious charge of malfeasance against some person unnamed. Let me say here and now, that as one of the Trustees of the Royal (as it now is) Philharmonic Society, these " documents " have not been " dispersed or made away with," for they are in my charge at this moment, and if any Ellis wishes to consult them in order to verify my statements, he has only to ask permission of the co-trustees and myself.

Up to the year 1855 and for many seasons to follow, Wagner's fee of £200 was the highest paid for conducting a complete series of concerts. In the year 1844 Mendelssohn's fee for conducting four

concerts was £150, and this was one of the rare seasons when there was a balance on the right side. The deficit in Wagner's season was £402 12s. 3d., as against the deficits of two earlier seasons of £533 and £418, which deficits show that there was nothing unusual in the loss under Wagner. Sterndale Bennett, who succeeded him, received a fee of £94 10s., and this odd sum of ninety guineas remained the standard fee for the conductor for some seasons.

What Ellis calls a "substantial loss" was not exceptional, but in those days a normal state of affairs. By his gross exaggerations and his disregard for literary and historical honesty, he leads us to conclude that he was well aware that what he calls the "disastrous" season was due to Wagner the man, not the musician. His attempt to put the burden upon innocent shoulders is unworthy, ungenerous, and unhandsome.

When Hogarth said (p. 109) that "The English public, in truth, is not now in a condition to form an estimate of the character of Richard Wagner," he was not referring to Wagner's works, as Ellis tries to make out, but to the man himself, in the hope that as time went on Wagner would stand less in his own light. But he concluded with the words, "The season, altogether, was neither pleasant nor successful; and, at its close, Mr. Wagner hastened to take his departure from England."

Nothing could have been more dignified or courteous than the letter of thanks and good will from the society at the end of the season.

2. MINNA

Enough has been said of the entirely false picture given by Ellis of Wagner's connection with the Philharmonic Society. It is more pleasant to turn to the letters to his wife, written during his stay in London, which show him in a very different, a more human light. Morose and churlish with those whom he had to meet, he was at times delightful in his correspondence with Minna. The letters enable us to think of this partnership as one that had its sunny and domestic side, and not that aspect of gloom and jealousy upon which some biographers have dwelt so persistently.

How was it that Minna, with no residence of any permanency, came to preserve so large a collection? That she set great store by them is clear from their being in existence, but where are the originals? Had she a presentiment that one day he would become famous, and that she, as his wife, would share the reflected glory? There are letters, long, long letters, of advice and upbraiding—letters which must have made her furious—letters which many a wife on receiving the like would have destroyed—letters, too, very different in style from those which we are about to study.

We are told that Wagner wished his letters to Frau Wesendonck destroyed; it was her will that they should see the light. We have yet to learn if there was a struggle between her and Frau Cosima Wagner, when Wagner's widow demanded the return

of everything that her husband had given or written to the Lady of Zurich. She, presumably a trustee of Wagner, must have had some power or authority to insist on the delivery of all papers in her husband's handwriting. No exception was made even in the case of Liszt, her own father, but Liszt, as we have seen, refused to hand over any. Why this anxiety? None of Wagner's letters could be published without the sanction of his legal representatives.

We in England can recall instances in which the indiscreet and unauthorized publication of letters of an intimate nature was suppressed without a moment's delay—letters written by people who in their day had quite as much of the limelight as ever Wagner enjoyed, but who are now in an uninteresting obscurity. No doubt the Richard-Minna correspondence will be illuminated at some time to come by the Minna-Richard letters, filling what I have called those "provocative lacunæ," eloquent even in their silences, which at every turn challenge inquiry.

To pass in review the immense bulk of Wagner's correspondence is a task for another generation, but incidentally it may be said that the feeling cannot be resisted that Wagner as his own "press agent," that invidious exploiter of human vanity, was not always writing to Minna in the privacy of conjugal intimacy, but now and then was hoping that ultimately his letters to her would be published, and that by showing him a long-suffering and loving husband, they would cast a veil over his questionable escapades.

Here, at any rate, in these letters from London, we have a welcome light upon the relations of the pair, and the picture is not without charm in the minuteness of its details, revealing to us a naïve side of Wagner's character which his biographers have striven to obscure by indirect allusions to the shortcomings and inadequacy of his wife.

During his ninety days in London, we are shown twenty-seven letters, so he must have written to her every three or four days. They introduce to us a Richard very different from the "philosopher," as he chose to call himself, of the *Prose Works,* and the lightness of touch, the family slang—a household without its special brand of slang is not a happy one—the descriptions of how he lived, are hardly to be reconciled with his complaints to others of his difficulties in London.

The financial position need not occupy us long. Wagner had in hand the £40 borrowed from Otto Wesendonck to see him on his way to London, and in the third or fourth week after his arrival he received £50, the first installment of the fee already mentioned for conducting eight concerts. Some foolish biographer, disparaging the amount, worked this out at so much per hour, as if any one calling himself an artist kept a timesheet.

It is scarcely intelligent to estimate mid-nineteenth century values by the standards of the early years of the twentieth. The cost of living in 1855 was much lower than it is to-day, and the present equivalent of

the fee is at least fivefold. Besides, in this as in other instances a sense of proportion was lacking, and the tendency was to consider Wagner as he ultimately became, and not as he then was, a man of new ideas which had yet to gain universal acceptance.

From the style of addressing Minna *en vedette* —there are more than a dozen varieties—and from the pet-names which he calls her, we must conclude that the pair were on excellent terms in these days. There was good reason for this: Wagner was a free man and his own master. Sometimes Minna was Dear Mietzel: You entirely good Mienel of Mine: sometimes Muzius: invariably something playful and affectionate. He signed himself Thy Richel, or Rich., RRRRichard, or Thy superlatively faithful Partner and Spouse.

A small matter at the outset concerns his hat. (Præger, *Wagner as I Knew Him*, p. 229.) He arrived in London in a "Necker," or slouch hat, which at that time identified its wearer with revolutionary tendencies. So off he was dragged to a hatter, to be crowned with the excessively tall hat that everyone wore in those days—a first step towards his becoming "like an Englishman" by what was outside and not inside his head. As his cranium was unusually large, he may have been fitted with the size which was specially made for the late Mr. Gladstone. This affair of the hat was in its way a kind of ceremonial initiation, after his arrival at London Bridge Station on the night of Sunday, March 5,

1855, when the weary and distraught foreigner was driven through the ill-lighted, ill-paved, silent streets to Præger's abode.

Howsoever Præger's account is aspersed, it must be acknowledged that without him Wagner must have been a lost soul. No doubt a great deal of his ill-humor may be put down to his feeling of utter helplessness in a large city, with unfamiliar and bewildering streets, with imperfect means of getting about, and with a poor service of public conveyances, which must have absorbed considerable sums of money. Therefore we may not be so rash in our surmise if we trace Wagner's attitude of mind to so significant a matter to him as a bus or cab fare.

He pitched his tent on the northwest side of Regent's Park, well within two miles of the concert room, but so as to be within reach of Præger as his guide. Soon he was to be supported by the loyal three—Sainton, the admirable leader of the Philharmonic Orchestra, afterwards to become one of ourselves, Lüders, and Klindworth, whose pianoforte arrangements have been the despair of many a lover of Wagner.

Nothing was kept from Minna. The little man, drowned in his tall hat, wrote to his "most faithful of wives" all about himself, his lodgings, his coal, his wine, his cigars (supplied by Sainton), his bus fares. What seemingly annoyed him most was payment for postage, but then if he would persist in writing sheet upon sheet, even in that microscopic

hand of his, he could not reasonably complain, and Minna was lacking in a nice discrimination of stamp-values.

It is in these letters during his ninety days in London that we get a solitary glimpse of the man, whom we all, with his music as our daily bread, would have been delighted and proud to have "mothered." There can be little doubt that Minna, at this time near her fiftieth year, was unconsciously the *consolatrix afflicti*. Of the many worlds which Wagner inhabited there were two predominant, the material and the spiritual. It is rare to find a coalescence of equilibrium between them, or, as Goethe puts it, "Steht die Zunge selten ein" (the verge of the scales seldom stands still). At this time, however, the verge stood quiet at zero. So we have for just this brief period Wagner in one pan of the scale, Minna in the other, looking up at the pointer and happy that it does not move.

All the business of presents to this or that, of lace and collars and cuffs, of bodices worn high or low, even of stockings, was referred to Minna for advice. The very littleness of these things brings home to us the joyousness of Wagner writing to his wife. There was the momentous question of a white necktie to be worn at the command performance before Queen Victoria, solved by the discovery of one of Præger's, which when washed and ironed looked as good as new. Then those white gloves prescribed by Philharmonic custom to be worn by conductors so that the orchestra could see the hands from a

badly lighted platform[1]—his amusement at having donned a pair that had been cleaned, thereby taking in, as he thought, Her Majesty. "The stockings I've bought you will certainly be considerably finer than the previous ones; they are of the best quality." These in answer to a commission from Minna. They cost "1½ pound the dozen." Then to avoid duty at the French customs he has them washed so as to look as if they had been worn, and marked by Madame Præger. It was to this good lady as *arbitrix elegentiarum,* that he went for advice about what was modish in female attire.

Then Minna has to do a little tailoring, to invent a summer suit, including "a handsome pair of trousers . . . merely lined with foulard." He is well up in the jargon, what with stomachers, chemisettes, and insertions of lace. Still he takes pleasure in visualizing his "dearest old woman" in gray cape and lilac bonnet. Clothes and wearing apparel are seldom out of the picture.

Up to this period there was no cloud; if one there was, it was transient. But then there came a complete change.

When Wagner returned to Zurich after his experiences in London, he became another man.

[1] This should dispose of the legend that when about to conduct a work of Mendelssohn's Wagner ostentatiously put on a pair of white kid gloves. At the same time etiquette prescribed that they had to be worn, especially when Royalty was present, and not so long ago, towards the end of Queen Victoria's reign, a conductor at the Opera was reprimanded for dispensing with them when a certain Personage was in the house.

3. ASYL

Of all the crises in Wagner's life—and when was there ever not one?—that which came to a head during his sojourn in Zurich dwarfed all others into trivial, immaterial episodes.

Let us recapitulate. Dresden . . . an assured position . . . an unjustifiable assurance of interference in politics . . . a warrant for arrest more significant than the warranty which he demanded for his music . . . flight . . . Zurich . . . Paris, with police at his heels . . . Bordeaux, with pistol at his head . . . alarums and excursions . . . then Zurich again. We need not fill in the gaps: he himself has given his own account; others more scrupulous have traversed the ground and his statements as well.

It is not necessary here to relate every incident of the strange friendship that sprang up between Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck. They met for the first time in February, 1852. Wagner was then thirty-nine years of age, she, twenty-four, married to Otto, aged thirty-seven, a well-to-do man of the world. There is no need to make too much of dates, but they cannot be disregarded. It is to be noted that more than six years intervened between the first acquaintance and the final climax which led to his leaving Zurich. More, perhaps, has been written of these six years than of any other period in Wagner's life, particularly because attention has been given to the attachment of a young woman to a man in middle life. But the years were as important musically, for

they saw the privately printed text of *The Ring,* the completion of *Das Rheingold* score, of the *Walküre* score, of part of the *Siegfried* score; they saw his excursion to London to conduct the Philharmonic Orchestra: but above all they saw the design of *Tristan,* the music of the first act, and the prelude.

Whatever the significance of dates, it is certain that the opportunity for intimate association in an unworthy sense could have been afforded only in the last twelve months of these six years—if at all. It is immaterial where the Wagner ménage or the Wesendonck ménage lived in Zurich from February, 1852 to 1857, but towards the latter year Otto Wesendonck had acquired some land, known as "The Green Hill," on which he was building a house of some pretensions. Adjoining this a plot was bought by him with a house which was converted into a dwelling for Wagner. It has since been demolished. Wagner and his wife, Minna, took possession in April, 1857, but it was not till July of the same year that the Wesendoncks were installed in the house of the Green Hill.

So long as social intercourse existed, Wesendonck was not the man to interfere, not, at any rate, until he found that the tenant of "Asyl," as Wagner's new abode was called, was trespassing upon the preserves of Green Hill.

But before this, Wagner's net was being cast over Mathilde. There was something electric in the man. The positive pole attracted Wesendonck himself as well as his wife. But Wagner's negative pole had

a property unrecognized by science in that it attracted these non-magnetic metals, gold and silver, and it cannot be denied that during the years under discussion, Wagner was a pensioner, dependent upon the bounty of his landlord and possibly of others. If he was not, who was it who provided the installment of a thousand francs to enable him to reach London to undertake his Philharmonic engagement? In writing to his "quite good Mienel" from London on March 30, 1855, he mentions Otto Wesendonck as the benefactor.[1]

Let it be made clear that Wagner, with the ever vigilant Minna in the background, had no purpose, at the outset at least, to imperil his resources—which were Wesendonck's—by playing fast and loose with Wesendonck's wife.

He had no footing in the Green Hill ménage till late in 1857. The situation then changed. Not content with the "Asyl" provided for him, Wagner took command of Wesendonck's own house. The entire establishment of his benefactor had to be

[1] Those who have a mind to explore the labyrinth of Wagnerian finance are referred to *Richard Wagner: Letters to Otto Wesendonck,* translated by Wm. Ashton Ellis, London, 1889. The note on p. 46, bearing upon a letter of August 28, 1859, may be compared with the letter of June 17, 1860, p. 72, and that of July 31, 1865, p. 99.

In another matter Ellis's assumption of Wagner's "innocence," in a comment on a letter of August 3, 1863, given on p. 318 of his translation of *Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck,* London, 1905, was effectively disposed of in 1912 by Julius Kapp in his *Richard Wagner und die Frauen,* thus showing the futility of shielding Wagner's lapses. See Ernest Newman's *Wagner as Man and Artist,* pp. 112, 113, and, later, Chapter xvii, p. 215.

adjusted to suit the whim of one who was most indebted to him. Truly had the situation changed; it had become intolerable. A generous man had given Wagner a roof over his head and was keeping him in funds, but Wagner, with insufferably bad manners, resented the presence of the master of the house, while he, Wagner, chose to occupy it. There could be little love in so ambiguous a position. The clean mind of Mathilde was divided between her husband's authority and honor and her wide-eyed devotion to a man who fascinated her, though she never could understand him.

Towards the close there were hot arguments. As in Bordeaux so again in Zurich. Da capo al segno. Wagner was ever at a loss to comprehend why some husbands should take the commonplace, vulgar, bourgeois view that wives and property were sacred. He considered nobody except himself, and thought it utterly unreasonable that others should not see eye to eye with him. Liszt's deprecatory gesture, "I am the servant of the public," was not his. "The public is my servant," was his—nay, all that the public possessed in any shape or form.

Wesendonck was not the man to tolerate the interloper. He had to put Wagner in his place, reminding him that he proposed to be master in his own house, while Wagner, spluttering in hendecasyllabics, claimed all mankind, and a fair slice of womankind, for his province.

No one studying the portraits of Mathilde Wesendonck would venture to read into her gentle face

and mien the character which some have attributed to her. Wagner's letters to her while he was in Zurich do not contain any exceptional terms of regard till we come to the summer of 1858, when it is clear that something must have happened. In an undated letter ascribed to the beginning of July there appear the words "stupendous conflicts."[1] These can only mean that the dénouement of a drama had been reached in which the husband played by no means an unimportant part. There had been an interview between Wagner and Wesendonck, in which, we may be sure, Wagner, overreaching himself, had attempted to define his own singular notions of marital rights. Compromise there had to be; Wesendonck had seen much of the world, and no doubt in his solid, business-like way had his matured ideas of domestic as well as commercial dealings. He did not subscribe to Wagner's involved theories, preferring the hard and cut-and-dried methods of good citizenship and the recognized currency of everyday life.

The Wagnerian plane of thought was in another latitude, more exotic, encumbered by an undergrowth of parasitic adjectives, foreign and strange to the ear of the prosperous man of affairs, downright in his uprightness.

In his eyes Mathilde had gone quite far enough in her admiration, but had not crossed the Rubicon . . . . Wagner, *Avignoné,* if I may venture to coin

[1] See *Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck,* translated by William Ashton Ellis, London, 1905, p. 24.

the allusive word, had built and bridged up to a point. But Minna was looking on, and the torrent of her words, long dammed back, burst forth and swept into the flood the last piers of Wagner's scaffoldings.

Wagner's "terms," if we knew them in detail, would have been deeply interesting. There was not altogether a rupture, for the Wesendoncks still maintained friendly relations with him, so long as he kept well out of reach.

How did the Romance begin? Was it with some *Lady of Lyons* business on Wagner's part, with a Claude Melnotte gushing about "eternal summer"?

It was scarcely like Wagner to settle down for a four or five years' siege when the beleaguered was a woman's heart. He made the direct assault, carried the outworks, and wreaking havoc of defense, pressed the attack right to the threshold of his objective.

We are still in Zurich, with the years between 1852 and 1857 to be accounted for. *Tristan* was then a dream, with no outlet, no fulfillment in sight till the request for an opera for Rio de Janeiro dragged the dream into the realms of hard fact. But Wagner had then on hand *The Ring,* not to be put aside unless more immediate demands filled the hour and scene. *Tristan* took shape, just the very thing, he imagined, for the audiences in South America, who regarded the opera from the personal point of view as a matter of pearls, diamonds, scent, scanty clothes, paraded in a baignoire while the people on the stage trifled with Rossini and Donizetti. Whatever he

afterwards became, he was not then unlike another Cortez, still solitary upon his peak, though by no means silent.

It has been taken for granted that *Tristan* was directly inspired by the Wesendonck affair. But a reference to dates somewhat qualifies this. The text was completed by September 18, 1857: the music of the Five Songs, called by Wagner *Studien zu Tristan und Isolde,* was written between November 30, 1857, and May 1, 1858. While Wagner, with his volcanic imagination and temperament, may have used the text as a covert apostrophe or a secret means of giving vent to his passion by idealizing Mathilde in Isolde, it is likely that her *Fünf Gedichte* were directly inspired by conversations concerning *Tristan,* and that Mathilde may have seen in Isolde the glorification of herself.

Here was a young, distinguished, well-educated and traveled lady, touched by sentiment and the romance of sharing the thoughts of a man for whom a high destiny was in store. She was of an age that was dangerous because it was impressionable; deeming herself privileged to be admitted to his confidences. She was a good mother, wedded to a man of lofty integrity and forbearance, yet in deadly peril of herself.

Wagner, who had the tender but misplaced affection for dumb animals, had no scruples about torturing this brave and loyal woman, and she, fascinated by him, dominated by an infatuation that was on his

side, not then on hers, felt herself dragged against her will towards a catastrophe. If these "stupendous conflicts" existed, were they shared by both, or was the phrase merely the Wagneresque expression of a none too subtle comedian?

To Wesendonck Wagner was sometimes a mountebank; between the two there was afterwards a good understanding, thanks to the kind offices of that admirable adjuster of differences—Distance. But here was a pretty state of affairs when Frau Wagner, a "good sort" but rather plebeian in her mind, resented the calm dignity and presence of a lady all but twenty years her junior. No one less godlike stepped out of the machine when Minna, with by no means an imperial gesture, ripped open the incriminating love-letter from Wagner, and rent high Heaven and the echoing walls of the Villa Wesendonck with her cries. Goddesses ere this, if we trust the "strange things in Lemprière," have been known to use their tongues, if not their finger nails.

It is unlikely that we shall ever know what Wagner wrote in that letter, but the sequel allows us to presume that the scène à faire was staggering. Just how Wagner took it is on record. There was a hurried packing up, and Wagner once more assumed the familiar rôle of fugitive, this time to Venice. It was from Venice that those letters *appassionato* came upon which so much of the Wesendonck legend has been based.

Before dawn, one morning in August, 1858, in the house on the Green Hill, a slim woman of thirty, wife, mother, but never lover, watched for the last time the lights go out in the windows of "Asyl."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: LOLA MONTEZ THE SECOND

IN a book of this kind, dealing for the most part with the analysis of character and Wagner's contact with an every-day world, it is not desirable to adhere strictly to a chronological sequence. This is provided in detail by the Table at the end of the book, which allows us here some liberty in discussing salient events.

Wagner left Zurich, as we have seen, in August, 1858, and Venice was his next most important stopping-place. But even here, though not free from police visitations on the part of the Austrian Government on representations from Saxony, he was able to continue his work on *Tristan*. There was no baffling the man. Wherever he went he carried the golden secret in his soul. He, to whom physical comfort and well-being meant so much, was ever moving from place to place. The itinerary is bewildering. From Venice he returned to Lucerne; Paris and Brussels saw him ; Paris again, with the fiasco yet to be mentioned. Biebrich am Rhein is hallowed forever by *Die Meistersinger*. Vienna fell out with *Tristan*. Concert tours took him to Russia, and then the awakening with Cosima von Bülow which occurs later in this chapter. Stratagems there were, and spoils and adventures which in after years were to provide material for a score of novelists, and then that scandalous letter to his housemaid at Penzing,

near Vienna, which will be referred to in Chapter XVII.

In the years between the close of the Wesendonck affair and the beginning of the deplorable association with Ludwig II, we may find ourselves abroad in our reckonings; but, as has already been said, we are more concerned with character, and dates and their rigid appearance must go adrift. Our interest is in the man; not in the time-table.

In flight from Vienna on account of his debts Wagner forced himself upon his friends, the Willes, at Marienfeld, and in his usual fashion took upon himself the duty of rearranging the establishment to his own liking. Fortunately for him, Dr. Wille was abroad on his arrival, or the master of the house would have turned him out of doors to seek a lodging elsewhere. Otto Wesendonck's lesson was already forgotten, and it was with sublime complacency that Wagner quoted Dr. Wille's remark when on his return he grasped the situation—" a man wants to be something more than a cipher in his own house." A world of meaning in these words, enlightening the character as much of the speaker, who did not suffer intruders gladly, as of the unblushing autobiographer.

Towards the end of April, 1864, the unwelcome guest received a bundle of bills and writs, from which he gathered that the liberty to which he had helped himself in another's house was likely to be cut short by a very different kind of hospitality, and once more

he was on the wing, this time incognito, bedraggled as to plumage, in fact.

But the incredible was blowing in from an unexpected quarter. Three or four years previously, Ludwig of Bavaria, then a lad of fifteen, had come across some writing of Wagner, and had been attracted by the presentation of *Lohengrin*. This singular infatuation for the works of a man whom he had never seen became an obsession, and one of his first acts, after ascending the throne, on March 10, 1864, was to seek out Wagner and to obtain something, anything, belonging to him. In this case the fetich consisted of a bit of lead pencil and a pen.

These precious relics were not enough: Ludwig wanted the man himself, and, barely six weeks on the throne, he dispatched Kabinettssecretär von Pfistermeister with orders to bring Wagner to Munich.[1] To Penzing, then, His Excellenz hied, only to find the nest empty. Wagner's creditors, by an inexplicable oversight, had not seized the scores of bottles of champagne left behind in the cellar. Then Staatsrat von Pfistermeister bethought himself of the Willes, with whom he was acquainted, and who knew Wagner, but he journeyed to Marienfeld to find himself once more balked of his prey. In this Wildjagd the

[1] The most complete and most recent account of this period is to be found in Gottfried von Böhm's *Ludwig II, König von Bayern, sein Leben und sein Zeit*, Berlin, 1922. This author, who was of the same age as Ludwig, held diplomatic and Court appointments which brought him in intimate contact with the affairs of the palace and the government. At the same time he was musically disposed, and was present at the first performance of *Tristan*.

fugitive was ultimately espied, and the elusive Wagner was brought down at Stuttgart, whither he had sped to implore help and shelter of his friend Karl Eckert.

On May 2, 1864, the King's secretary called upon Eckert, handed in his card, and asked to see Wagner, who naturally had no idea of this person's mission. Greatly upset that his stay in Stuttgart should have become known, he went off in a huff to an hotel, but here again he was in terror of writs or arrest when the proprietor informed him that a visitor from Munich wanted to see him. Wagner felt himself in a trap, but there was nothing for it except to make an appointment for the following morning. He passed a wretched night.

On May 3 he received Kabinettssecretär von Pfistermeister and had his breath taken away when he heard what was in store. His Excellenz gave him a ring with a red stone (mit rotem Stein) as a token of King Ludwig's affection for him, and a letter inviting him to Munich. Here was relief at last. In the afternoon he and Pfistermeister made for the station, but it would not have done for Wagner to start on so epoch-making an adventure without a contretemps, and there was a muddle about his ticket. Characteristically he went off without paying his hotel bill, and the head waiter had to be content, by way of a " tip," with a magnificent snuff-box which had been presented to Wagner in Russia.

On May 4 Wagner had his first audience with the King.

This is not the place to enter into the manner of living led by Ludwig II. That has been dealt with by practiced hands, and the inferences admit of no extenuations. Apart from the nauseating tone of his letters to Wagner, and of Wagner's to him, there can be little doubt about the mental outlook of either. On one side there was painful lack of stability, of which the other took advantage. A man of fifty-one, as Wagner was at the beginning of the acquaintance, knowing more of the shady side of life than of its brightness, must have cast to the winds every shred of self-respect, if not knowledge of the world, to allow himself to be inveigled by the hysterical outbursts of a lad not out of his 'teens and a reigning monarch into the bargain. The gulf that separated them socially was to be bridged over by the pasteboard and canvas of stage trickery, and from the outset Wagner saw himself alone in the limelight.

As he said, referring to Liszt, "Er ist mehr zu mich als ich ihm," and so also was it here. Ludwig II was King of Bavaria: Wagner saw to it that he himself was Bavaria; and it was Wagner, wrapped in the mantle of Bavaria, that moved the hand of Ludwig.

No doubt the people of Munich at a much later date blessed the pair for attracting visitors and benefiting trade through notable performances in their midst. But that was a phase to come.

The unhealthy infatuation of Ludwig should have struck Wagner at the beginning and put him on his guard. Instead, he "fooled him to the top of his

bent." Through Ludwig he drained the royal treasury to bankruptcy, and saw himself and his works swelling in the midst of an unaccustomed plenty. It was only natural that those within the inner circle of the Court should have had misgivings. Medical knowledge was not then what it is now. A Tribunal *de lunatico inquirendo* would have given a verdict for a regency. On the face of it, and ultimately on the very face of Ludwig, there was enough to justify such a decision.

Apart from social distinctions in a Court where rigid etiquette was enforced, there was this summoning to his side by Ludwig of a composer of operas who was thrice his age: a revolutionary, moreover, under a ban of exile; a pamphleteer with views which, if ever understood, were subversive, in theory at least, of the form of his royal patron's government. Small wonder, then, that statesmen and Ministers, with the record in mind of Ludwig's grandfather, should have viewed with dismay the distractions of their young sovereign. There was no little justification for the suspicion hinted at, then openly expressed in blunt undisguised phrases, that Wagner was playing the part of a Lola Montez, this time in trousers. " Die zweite Ausgabe der Lola," as Böhm remarked, quoting from a Munich newspaper of the time, " the Second Edition of Lola."

How far Wagner's influence extended in questions of policy is not clearly established, but there can be no doubt about his creating in Ludwig, and fostering,

his enthusiasm for the legendary characters in his music dramas. The walls of Neuschwanstein had more than ears. This immense pile of masonry, erected as much to glorify Ludwig as to enshrine the scenes and characters of Wagnerian drama, had its walls disguised, if not disfigured, by vast paintings in the best Munich style of the period. This castle, picturesquely situated, and not without what Bacon would have called a "curiosity" of its own, while bringing goodly wage to architect and builder, to sculptor and painter, to carver and mason, stands as a monument of misapplied ability and knowledge, in which no decent mortal could ever have found a comfortable bed, far less a hot meal. Sleep there would have been a nightmare: the dinner table an instrument of torture to the legs of a guest.

Yet Wagner, with his exalted ideas, urged on this degenerate youth. Therein lay the gravamen. Admitted that there were superficial affairs that attracted this lad, a posturer in the hands of a mountebank, it is a matter for musicians to think over and to think about wisely and quietly. Great as the music was and is, no one conscious of his art and of its truthfulness can overlook the narrow and ignoble circumstances which encouraged it.

Here were two visionaries, two fantastics—the one with eyes directed to a sole end: Wagner the one, with imagination outstriding the half-hearted conventions of his day; the other astride a throne, a coward in war time, happier in his fancy dress with

his clock-work swam than on a sturdy charge at the head of his troops.

Things did not always move smoothly: the King blew hot and cold. On more than one occasion Wagner was out of favor, to be readmitted by a fatuous letter from the King, in the style of a sentimental schoolgirl of the 'sixties. The newspapers, with an audacity surprising to us, hardened in our own time to Teutonic "Verbietenssystem," again and again were filled by démentis from one side or the other as to rumors of Wagner's influence. Strange indeed was the atmosphere: enthusiasm undoubtedly there was at first for the young monarch—enthusiasm, too, for the young bride whose aspirations to a crown were to be rudely shaken when, after costly preparations, gilded coach and all, Ludwig at the eleventh hour cried off.

Years after, when the disastrous chronicle came to be told, she must have been thankful for the lesser dignity of a Duchesse of France (she married Ferdinand d'Alençon, son of the Duc de Nemours, uncle of Louis Philippe) instead of a throne in Bavaria, fraught with daily, hourly anxiety and dread. She, as Duchesse d'Alençon, in heroism nobler than a queen, perished in the fire of the Charité Bazaar in Paris in May, 1897, in trying to rescue some young girls.

In this business of the breaking off of the engagement, had Wagner a hand? The sum of Wagner's interference in state affairs will not be told to the present generation. With our knowledge there are

many contradictions. We are told that when Wagner touched upon politics Ludwig whistled.[1]

There may have been reasons of state for minimizing Wagner's influence. An admission that Ludwig was being guided by him in high matters of policy would have cast discredit upon the Ministers who were responsible for advising the King. The thought would have been humiliating to the nation that at the King's right hand was a man, not a Bavarian by birth, whose propensity for meddling in other people's affairs was notorious and intolerable. There always has been, and always will be, attached to a throne a confidant outside the sacred circle of a Mininstry, whose opinion is taken, though it may not be followed, upon questions of statesmanship.

This may have been Wagner's position. But tongues were busy; busier still the newspapers. In a letter of February 26, 1865, to Frau Wille he sums up the situation.[2]

"Why is it that where I sought peace to work undisturbed, I have become involved in responsibilities in which the welfare of a heavenly-gifted man, perhaps the well-being of a nation, have been thrust upon me? How can I keep my heart secure? How still be an artist? The kind of man that he [the King] needs is lacking. This is my true anxiety. The open game of intrigue, clearly calculated to drag me out of my-

[1] Translated as "smoked" by Frances Gerard in her *Romance of Ludwig II of Bavaria,* London, 1899, p. 67.

[2] Quoted by Böhm, p. 55. Frances Gerard gives a translation and inserts a negative which is not in the text.

self, to entice me to commit an indiscretion, simply drops to pieces. I need all my detachment and energy to rescue my young friend from his environment for good."

To what can Wagner be referring if not to Ludwig's entourage? He evidently realized that if he followed the inclinations of his heart and detached Ludwig from surroundings which he thought undesirable, he would be interfering with his own work as a composer. He was wideawake enough to suspect a trap, but too poor a hand at diplomacy to coax some one else into it.

Meanwhile he was looming still more largely in the public eye. The first performance of the then incomprehensible music of *Tristan* was given on June 10, with von Bülow as conductor. Just two months earlier, Cosima von Bülow had given birth to a daughter, the paternity of whom was claimed both by von Bülow and . . . by Wagner. Fifty years later a salacious case, based upon this claim, was thrashed out in the German law courts.

Not a few must have known of the liaison, and this if nothing else, must have been seized upon by the Court and Ministry as a justification for ostracizing Wagner. It was so like him to indulge in rhapsodies about the hours that he spent with Ludwig, the pair gazing speechless into one another's eyes. And it was just as unedifying in the case of Frau von Bülow.

If Wagner had built a wall round himself through the interest of Ludwig, he was the first to give an opening to his enemies. It was inexpedient and un-

desirable that a man who had everything against him except his music should be in a position to tamper with the affairs of a state, in which, though he had become a naturalized citizen, he was openly regarded as a hostile and discredited alien. It began to dawn upon those close to the throne that something was awry. Rightly or wrongly Wagner was made the scape goat. With lack of forethought he had proclaimed his views about putting no trust in princes, although indebted to at least two of them if not to more. To Wagner rather than to Ludwig himself the opposition turned by discounting Ludwig's peculiarities and shortcomings, and a case appeared to be made out that it was Wagner who was responsible for Ludwig's vagaries.

Böhm was in a position to hear direct complaints of Wagner's meddling in state affairs, although one of Wagner's friends tried to soften matters by saying that "the influence of a favorite did not exist."[1] For all that, and for any acceptance and fulfillment of Wagner's counsels, the Ministry was stiffened by the growing resentment of the people against his presence in their midst, and forced the irresolute King to issue an edict putting Wagner across the Bavarian frontier. The Decree of Banishment was published, and in the chilly early hours of December 10, 1865, Wagner left Munich with the understanding that Cosima, née Liszt, wife of von Bülow—daughter of one, wife of

[1] Quoted by Böhm, p. 98. The word used was "Günstlingsherrschaft."

the other of the two men to whom he owed everything, would join him when he was settled beyond the arm of the law in Switzerland.

It was an unshamed, shameless exit.

Telegrams in those days were not a public institution, and had not yet become a Teutonic habit, so Ludwig rounded off the moment in a letter which was some kind of Swan Song. It was probably copied from some German Compleat Letter Writer, some Secrétaire Universel, as appeared to be the case in later days owing to a suspicious similarity of wording in two of his letters, written with a considerable interval of years between them.

Early in 1866 there was diplomatic tension in Bavaria. For some reason of state Prussia was at daggers drawn with Austria, and Bavaria, the neighbor of Austria, stood in with that country. Wagner, at this time conveniently a Bavarian subject, but safe in Switzerland, flung in his lot with Austria, although begged by his friends to remain neutral.

His birthday fell due in the midst of diplomatic pourparlers, and Ludwig though fit to pay him a surprise visit at Lucerne at this critical moment. When the news of this clandestine affair reached the capital the people were furious.

Wagner's hatred of Prussia was never concealed, and in the period of uncertainty which preceded the outbreak of hostilities, Ludwig's visit—whether out of courtesy or to consult the stormy petrel whom he had expelled from Munich only five months before

—was regarded as a disloyal act. It inflamed the nation and Bavaria went headlong into the Seven Weeks' War.

The humiliating end came swiftly—the climax on July 3 at Sadowa—the anti-climax in the grounds of one of his palaces, where Ludwig, masquerading in skin-tights, received the news of his country's fate.

Three months later Wagner wrote to Ludwig in terms which left no doubt about his attempts to influence the King in questions of state.[1]

" Through the politics of your Ministers, in whom treachery, incompetence, and vanity are combined, Bavaria is on the point of seeking its salvation by a surrender to Prussia."

This, written in October, 1866, shows pretty clearly the rôle which Wagner took upon himself to play in state affairs.

Not quite the last scene that ends this strange eventful history, that for musicians hath spoiled the sweet world's taste. . . . When, in 1865, resentment against Wagner was at its height, he sought to borrow the sum of 40,000 florins from the King. With the florin at twelve to the pound sterling this represented three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three point three repeater pounds in plain figures, £3333.3̇. The loan was opposed by Excellenz Staatsratkabinettssecretär von Pfistermeister, but he was overruled by Ludwig. The Treasury in revenge decided that the

[1] Böhm, p. 142.

amount should be paid in cash, in silver coinage. The total weight was little short of half a ton.[1]

[1] Böhm (p. 47) is not certain about the exact amounts of the earlier borrowings, but the sum just mentioned is authenticated. There was a loan at a later date of 200,000 florins which, it is only fair to state, had to be repaid on Ludwig's death in 1886. This did not go far in liquidating the King's debts, which amounted to well over a million sterling. See *Louis II de Bavière,* by Jacques Bainville, Paris, 1900.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: PARIS AGAIN

I. 1861-1870

WHEN Wagner arrived in Paris in 1859 there must have been those whose memories recalled the man who had lived among them twenty years before. How, then, were they going to receive him whom they had found "un homme aigri, mécontent de tout, grincheux et difficile à vivre?" (a soured man, discontented with everything, setting one's teeth on edge, difficult to live with). They may not have forgotten his having signed one of his inept articles with the name of a not unknown Parisian musician. If not forgery it was at least a false attribution, not the only instance of his sailing under false colors.

Although he had with him four grand operas which had been performed in Germany, there were nevertheless against him men practicing his own art who had ample reason to resent what was to them an intrusion. He was to reap the tares of his earlier sowings.

From the outset he had prejudiced his case. Apart from his music, incomprehensible as it then was to many, it was not exactly as a welcome guest that he set foot in the capital. A Saxon outlaw, no matter his genius, was not to find all arms open to him in a city whose streets alone, if nothing else, had borne witness to a struggle against authority. The antecedents of Wagner the busybody were known. The

political world was divided. The Man of December the Second was held to be a parvenu, and his assumption of the dignity and state of Emperor was not greeted with enthusiasm by the old and exclusive aristocracy of the Faubourg. What he chose to patronize, finance, and command—no matter the object—was not always to win favor with those grandsons and kinsmen on the Rive Gauche, the descendants of many whose locks had been sheared at the Conciergerie, the sign that in a few hours a less complacent barber would complete the " toilet," as it was called, and shear them of their lives.

The Parisian public had been fairly well nursed upon Wagner's music so as to lead up to the production of one of his operas, and *Tannhäuser* was chosen because of the four it was the best known, by name and by the overture. It was not without pressure from high quarters that the doors of the Grand Opera yielded to Wagner. He had met Maréchal Magnan, a constant attender at his concerts, and he begged him to use his influence at Court to obtain a " command " performance. Prince Metternich was the Austrian Ambassador, and it was through the agency of his wife that Napoleon III was approached.

At this time the French Court was the most brilliant in Europe. The Empress Eugénie and her husband—she with her beauty and attractiveness, he with his bonhomie and good nature—were able to carry off the honors, despite Bourbon or Orléans, despite that claimant, " Henri V.," indifferent to any Roubillac who might be behind him, knife in hand.

This kind of Court influence was not of the best for a composer who was a foreigner with a dubious record. There were still those, as I have suggested, who, while passively tolerating the nouveau régime, kept a watchful eye upon every move, and they had their headquarters in the Jockey Club. We shall see presently the significance of this.

Wagner had no grounds for complaint that he was not loyally and liberally served at the outset when Napoleon gave the order to his Minister of State, Count Walewski, to put *Tannhäuser* in rehearsal. Preparations were begun on September 24, 1860. For the six months that were to follow the musical world of Paris was divided into two camps. On one side were Wagner's friends, literary as well as musical, and the German colony with their contributions: on the other were hostile musicians, not altogether unprovoked, there were flippant journalists, and particularly the aristocratic frequenters of the Opera. It did not help Wagner when it was hinted that Napoleon himself had subsidized the work to the amount of 100,000 francs.

From the first Wagner would not hear a whisper of the possibility of failure, although it was pointed out to him that the character of the Opera was alien to Parisian taste. A mythical subject was unsuited to a public accustomed to a "directness" of theme; there was no ballet, and no clear opportunity in the text for one to be introduced. Then the libretto had to be translated.

Of these objections the first could not be enter-

tained: it was impossible to convert *Tannhäuser* into something that would be acceptable. As for the ballet, Wagner composed music which had to come in the first act, since there was no other place for it, and it was incongruous in style and development. An opera which had had its first performance sixteen years earlier, was not vigorous enough to bear the graft of a more mature growth. The translation of the text into French by a man who did not know German, had to meet the approval of a German author who understood French imperfectly, and the question whose name was to appear on the bills as the translator had to be settled in the law courts and against Wagner.

No opera had been mounted so splendidly, and Wagner was not obstructed in his choice of singers, yet he was not satisfied. He wished to depose Dietsch, whom we have met in connection with *The Dutchman,* from his seat as conductor, owing to incompetence and his unsympathetic attitude towards the music, but it was contrary to the traditions of the Grand Opera for a composer to conduct his own work, and Wagner's appeal failed. But he sought to control Dietsch from the prompter's box, raising clouds of dust by stamping his feet.

In spite of crises that arose daily Wagner was undaunted, but he could not see that good will was scarcely to be secured by incessant interference, and many must have been the furious letters that he penned on reaching home after rehearsal. His friend, Gasperini, bore witness to the tenor of a

letter addressed to Wagner shortly before the first performance by Royer, the manager, in which "unjust recriminations and violence" on the part of Wagner were referred to as likely to ruin the production.

It would seem as if matters could not be made worse, but they were, by Wagner's maladroit letter to Frédéric Villot on *The Music of the Future,* in which he explained his theories. This was seized upon with joy by his adversaries, who found that they had all but run out of their stock of malicious pleasantries.[1]

To crown all, he fell ill with the strain, and it need not arouse surprise that a man who was the cause of so much irritation in others did not escape many a blistering counter-irritant.

The first performance took place on March 13, 1861, and has often been described. Surely no single performance of any opera has been so copiously "documented." The regular subscribers used to go to the Opera as part of a social function, and a ballet was indispensable for their entertainment. In opera the best-kept secret becomes a secret de Polichinelle, when as many as 500 people may be employed behind the curtain, and the habitués who had heard that their traditional rights were to be scouted took steps accordingly.

On subscription nights the house did not fill till an

[1] In this Letter, p. 15, translated by E. Dannreuther, he says, "Notwithstanding a serious scientific education [*sic !*] I was from my earliest youth in constant and close contact with the stage." Compare Appendix A.

opera was well on its way—that is, about the second or third act. But on this first performance the audience came early and there was an unexpected kind of claque from the Jockey Club. Here and there were hostile groups who showed their displeasure in an unusual way. A gunsmith in the neighborhood was sold out of whistles and dog-calls used in sport, and the purchasers were young bloods who were out to "spoil sport." The situation was deplorable. After the overture, which was well received, the opposition gave tongue. The general atmosphere was hilarious; we are not told that there were any cries of, "Conspuez Wagner!"

Consider the result of the disaster: the work of six months, of those 164 rehearsals, the preparation of singers and orchestra, the drilling of ballet and stage-hands, the perfecting of elaborate scenery—all thrown away because an organized opposition could not bear to forgo its ballet for a single night.

Five days later, after Wagner had made large cuts, the Emperor and Empress were present, but even before them Gallic courtesy and good manners were laid aside.

Baudelaire's protest disclosed a strange state of things. He said that it was outrageous that the men-about-town who had created the uproar should have been influenced by their *chères amies* in the ballet because the opera did not satisfy *their* requirements. So a serious work was to be wrecked at the whim of a pack of ballet-girls.

The third and last performance was given on

March 24. This was not a subscribers' night, but the opposition had bought up the seats and crowded the house so that the receipts were higher for that class of night than any in the preceding five years.

It is said that orders from the Tuilleries stopped further performances, but it is more likely that Wagner, by the advice of his friends, sent the dignified letter to the Director withdrawing the work. This was disconcerting for seats had been booked in advance for other performances, and it is not improbable that the scandalous treatment which Wagner had received would have been atoned for, to some extent, by a great demonstration in his favor. Those who had the good name if not the musical taste of Paris at heart would have seen to it that there was an amende honorable.

But Wagner was not to be moved, and on this occasion at any rate, he showed that he could preserve a calm and firm demeanor in face of so terrible a blow. Still, we are left puzzling over it all. Is it not a little strange that contemporary opinion should have used harsh terms in discussing his character and bearing during those intolerable months? We read that Wagner was "le véritable auteur de toutes ses tortures par son insociabilité et son outrecuidance qui lui ont créé plus d'ennemis certes que sa musique. Il ennuyait, il agaçait tout le monde, et tout l'agaçait." (He was the real author of all his tortures by his lack of sociability and his presumption, which created far more enemies than his music did. He was annoying, he irritated everybody, and everything

irritated him.) So it was thought not to be his music alone that led to the fiasco. Artistically it was given every chance; socially it revealed a pitiful outburst of unrighteous temper; but can we be so sure that there was nothing else behind it all? Might there not have been a covert attack upon the throne for its protection of a foreigner?

There was an astonishing sequel. During the night of June 19, fire broke out in the building in which the scenery of *Tannhäuser* was stored, and everything was burnt to ashes. So after all he had his conflagration!

In the years that followed, thanks to Hainl and Pasdeloup, performances of Wagnerian extracts were numerous, and the cause of Wagner would have progressed from triumph to triumph had it not been for the War with Prussia.

And then EINE KAPITULATION!

2. EINE KAPITULATION

To arrive at the bewildering state of mind—even were that possible—of the Richard Wagner who wrote *Eine Kapitulation,* we have to see how he was occupied after the fiasco in Paris of *Tannhäuser.*

We must not forget that by the year 1861 *Tannhäuser* was about sixteen years old. In this period that part of Wagner which was musical was undergoing a process of evolution. In the years that came after the Paris performance there were wrought those miracles in sound, *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger,* with *Parsifal* hovering over his mind.

And then the downfall, not of France, but of Wagner the man, not the composer.

By the year 1870 Wagner was marching towards achievement, with the performances of *Tristan, Die Meistersinger, Rheingold,* and *Die Walküre.* His insatiable brain was adding glory to glory for mankind: it was splendid in its flights, but at the crack of a rifle it came down to a lesser, a baser earth.

Impatient, greedy of adulation, ever ready with a biting tongue, this man, whom all the world recognizes as the outstanding figure of music in his century, stooped to write, and, what was worse, to print, and exult in, a scandalous libel.

If during the months in Paris Wagner had shown himself more of a man of the world, and had acted so that no one could have charged him with "excessive vanity," if he had not been found a man "suspecting everybody," if he had remembered that he owed his amnesty to Napoleon who surrendered on September 4, 1870, he would never have struck at a nation on its knees, its capital encircled by Prussian troops with their guns trained and about to shell and starve its inhabitants into submission.

Paris did not capitulate till January 27, 1871, and therefore his odious libretto, written in October, 1870, should more appropriately have been entitled *Die Kapitulation der Zukunft.* As it was, even when published in 1873, the more thoughtful in all countries, much as they upheld Wagner as a great composer, shuddered that he should have gone to the gutter for his wit, with his foul pun of *égout* (drain)

upon Victor Hugo's name. There was no greatness, no fine humanity here.

Wagner was elusive. In this case as in others, when challenged, he attempted to tone down his blunder by declaring that he did not mean what he said. Witness his long-winded and confused explanation of his attitude about the time of the Dresden affair. Witness his plea that he had no political influence whatsoever over Ludwig II, although he was convict of interference out of his own mouth. He was not two men, but many. Of him well might it have been said, "Quot homines, tot sententiæ"—in all things except in his music.

When he found that his ill-conditioned jest was deeply wounding, "profondément blessant," to the French nation, as his admirer, Lichtenberger, wrote, he made a show of concealing the wound, but only caused it to gape the wider, by pretending that the lampoon was aimed at the German nation. Ellis (*Prose Works,* Vol. IV, p. 4), with ultra-refinement of taste, spoke of the vulgar thing as likely to produce an "uproarious comic effect." Upon whom, we may ask?

Lifted as we are beyond the stars by his music, we are shocked by the discovery that the genius who carries us up to the heights was, in his intercourse with mankind and manhood, merely a *chiffonier.*

Hard things have been said about Wagner as he lived, hard enough here in this book, despite the gorgeous raiment of sound with which we are enveloped, but nothing can wipe out that stain.

If the new-born German Empire did not immediately welcome Wagner to its bosom, he with his self-propaganda was becoming a man to be watched, and his influence was giving rise to apprehensions.

In his person there was nothing of the militant, but through his music he was not far from displacing from his pedestal that man of blood and iron, Bismarck himself. And Bismarck was well aware that it was not wholly by means of soldiery that the German states had been liberated from the dominance of Napoleon, but by minstrels and ballad-singers. The man who feared neither bullet nor bayonet, took heed of this outlaw.

In days to come, when time has had leisure to focus projects and accomplishments in their due perspective, Wagner may then be, as Luther is now, in "glorious company." No saint is worthy of canonization who has not sinned splendidly. But when the Devil's Advocate comes to plead before some Congregation of Musical Rites, his strongest argument should be that while his client undoubtedly sinned, he sinned stupidly.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: TRIEBSCHEN

IN an earlier chapter (p. 126) it was said that Liszt's daughter, Cosima, wife of Hans von Bülow, was passing through a "moral crisis." That, according to Adelheid von Schorn, was in January, 1861. This was after Frau von Bülow and Wagner had met for the first time, in Zurich in September, 1857, before Wagner had moved into Asyl. There were visits later, and the von Bülows were guests at Asyl in August, 1858, when Wagner was having a "crisis" of his own, as we have seen in Chapter xiv. 3.

As far as can be gathered there was not any advance on Wagner's part at this time; or even in 1861, when we are led to believe that Cosima must have hinted to her father that all was not well with herself and von Bülow. Liszt, with all his experience of irregular liaisons and divorces, could not but see some parallelism with his own adventurings. We do not know if Wagner's name was mentioned, but the recklessness of his daughter, then a mere girl of twenty-three, must have sent him rummaging in his brain for precedents and solutions. Whatever was at the root of it all, she had not yet left her husband, for in 1863 she presented him with a daughter, Blandine, before Wagner set out on his Russian tour.

It was in November of this year in Berlin, when von Bülow was rehearsing for a concert, that Wagner and Frau von Bülow took that memorable drive,

when they "gazed speechless" into one another's eyes, and Wagner discovered that further researches for feminine sympathy and companionship were needless. But in spite of this he was still demon-driven. He was disloyal to two women to whom he professed to be attached, and it takes one's breath away to read the extraordinary terms of his letter to his housemaid at Penzing, a suburb of Vienna, where he took refuge in December, 1863. He had just left Cosima—references by Christian names cannot now be avoided—after one of these intense eye-gazings with which we have become familiar through Wagnerian music-drama, and was still corresponding with Mathilde, to whom he described his Penzing ménage, with what we now know as unblushing effrontery. Ellis, who, it is fair to state, may not have been aware of the letter published later by Kapp, comments upon "the amazing innocence of the whole arrangement." Amazing—yes—and something more.[1] Did Ellis know the truth?

From Penzing Wagner fled, pursued by creditors, to force himself upon the Willes, as we have noted in Chapter xv. When he took Ludwig II in hand he was not long in finding Court appointments for his friends, with one eye on von Bülow the conductor, and the other on Cosima his wife. By July, 1864, all barriers were down, and in April, 1865, just two

[1] See Ernest Newman's *Wagner as Man and Artist,* p. 113, where he gives a translation of the letter from Julius Kapp's *Richard Wagner und die Frauen,* p. 194. See also *Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck,* p. 318, and p. 188 *ante.*

months before the first performance of *Tristan,* to the rehearsals of which von Bülow was giving all his heart and soul, Isolde was born to Cosima, a child claimed alike by von Bülow for his wife's honor, and by Wagner. Fifty years later came the sequel, as hinted on p. 184.

On his expulsion from Munich at the end of 1865, a manœuvre in which Bismarck was said to have had a hand, Wagner went to the Lake of Geneva, but early after the New Year there was a fire (!) in his hotel which sent him packing to the south of France, in search of a permanent abode.

While he was in Marseilles, on January 25, Minna, his sad, misunderstanding wife, died suddenly. Even in her last fortnight, though separated from him, she still had this pride in him that she published a letter in which she declared that through thick and thin Wagner had always supported her. Many were the light o' loves of whom he had boasted, mostly untruthfully, but Minna, loyal in her own way, though in desperate health and drugged all but to oblivion, had it in her to make this, her last, beau geste.

On Easter Sunday, April 1, 1866, Wagner moved into Triebschen, a villa on the outskirts of Lucerne, the first haven of his life—der eigentlich erste wirkliche Ruhepost seines Lebens—where he was to spend the next six or seven years. It was quite like him to get his friends in Munich, among them Franz, pathetic in his growing deafness, to pack up and send the questionable treasures of the Munich household all the way to Lucerne. Apparently there was

no upholsterer in Lucerne with forms to Wagner's own conceit, so one had to be dragged from Geneva to furnish the outré establishment. He who vented his spleen upon Philistinism in Art was in his home more than a Philistine—he was a vulgarian.

And the amazing thing is that he wrote divine music.

By May Cosima had left her husband for Triebschen, taking with her his and her children, Daniela and Blandine, and the poor little Isolde, then scarcely more than twelve months old.

In October, 1866, into this household came Hans Richter as copyist, transcribing the scarcely dry sheets of *Die Meistersinger* as Wagner passed them on to him. As far as is known to-day Richter made no record of his stay at Triebschen, but he must have been aware of the relations of his hosts—quite an ancient song in those times of matrimonial differences. In any case he could not close his mind to the arrival, in February, 1867, of a daughter, Eva, to his hostess. His could not have been an enviable position confused between obstetrics and orchestration.[1]

For the historian there are incompatible elements, to be reconciled only by some katalytic action of the brain, so far unknown and unfathomable. For Germany, and thereafter for the world, there is *Die Meistersinger,* brought to bed at Triebschen.

[1] At present there is no known record of these times from Richter's own pen. His "verbal description" appeared twenty-seven years later. See Glasenapp, vol. iv, pp. 195 and 215, and his supplementary note on p. 447.

An incredible state of affairs seems to have prevailed at the end of 1866. In December von Bülow was laid up in Basle, but on the last day of the year he was at Triebschen, writing regretfully to Raff that it had been impossible for him to spend Christmas Day with his family in Wagner's house, as he was in bed.[1]

But he records (p. 169) that on New-Year's Day 1867 he went with Wagner and "meine Frau" to Zurich to inspect the model of the theater which Semper, the architect, was making for Munich.

On February 16th, from Basle he writes that his "dear wife" is not at all well, but on the 20th, using for him the rare address, "Villa Triebschen" (p. 175), he writes that "on Sunday morning at ten o'clock my dear wife was happily delivered of a healthy little girl," and he adds in brackets thus, "(Nr. 4!)." On p. 176 he says that on Tuesday the child was baptized with the names "Eva-Marie."

To let dates speak for themselves, in his letter of May 13, 1866, to Ritter (p. 112), he says that it will give great pleasure to his wife if it will be possible for him to come to Munich where the two are living at the time.

After the birth of Eva, von Bülow continues to refer to his wife: "yesterday and to-day I have good reports of her," (February 26, p. 177). On April 5 (p. 180) at Basle he notes that "my wife arrived

[1] Hans von Bülow: *Briefe,* IV Band, p. 168. (Leipzig, 1900.)

here yesterday," and on April 7 he speaks of Wagner having arrived the night before.

On May 1 (p. 182) he writes to Raff that "my wife is very well, thank God, and in the last twelve days we have come to a definite arrangement." What could this be? Again, on May 30 (p. 186) from Munich he sends Raff "warm greetings from my wife."

On p. 207 there is a letter to von Bülow from Wagner, dated October, 1867, from Triebschen, which, eighteen months later, May 3, 1869, was indorsed by von Bülow with the extraordinary comment that this letter of "Herr Richard Wagner" was one of the few in which he signed his name in full, no doubt anticipating that it would pass into the hands of some collector of autographs. The letter, referring to business matters, has no bearing upon our subject beyond showing von Bülow's attitude of mind towards Wagner. Four weeks after the date of the indorsement Siegfried Wagner was born.

This month of October, 1867, saw matters brought to a head. *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* had just been performed under von Bülow at Munich after the most conscientious preparations. Liszt was present with "les Bülow," as he wrote to Carolyne von Wittgenstein.[1] The letter was dated September 26, 1867.

Of Liszt's attitude towards von Bülow at this time

[1] *Franz Liszts Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein*, Sechster Band, dritter Theil: Leipzig, 1902, p. 155.

we are not so sure. He may have dropped more than a hint that the Hans-Cosima-Richard situation had become intolerable. Whatever was in the wind, Liszt suddenly made up his mind to go to Triebschen, and in his letter of Friday, October 11, to Carolyne von Wittgenstein (p. 159) he described his movements. He wrote that on the 9th he was with Wagner.[1]

That is all. He said nothing about the object of his visit, or its result. They were all drifting apart, and in a letter dated June 23, 1869, von Bülow showed the mood that he was in by the words, "I've no intention of going to Liszt in Rome. To me my father-in-law is too much the Abbé outwardly: inwardly too little. We no longer understand one another." This comes at the end of the letter in which he calls *Tristan* a fatalistic, ominous work, and adds the pleasing information that the répétiteur, after the excitement of the rehearsals, had to be removed to an asylum!

Of the upshot of this mysterious visit to Triebschen we shall always be in the dark. Liszt and Wagner were closeted for six hours. We can imagine the one mute, stricken; the other rhetorical in justification. When the conversation was over, Liszt went to the piano and played through *Die Meistersinger* at sight from the full score, then at last finished. In the music at least he had not lost all faith, for soon after he wrote to Carolyne von Wittgenstein

[1] Glasenapp quotes Pohl's *Liszts Besuch in Triebschen,* IV, p. 217.

that none but Wagner could have accomplished such a masterpiece.

It is not difficult to surmise the drift of this secret conversation. In his customary way Wagner had been using von Bülow for his own ends, namely, the production of his works, but he could not comprehend that in his private life he well merited a horse-whipping and more. Bad enough would it have been had Cosima been the wife of some one other than von Bülow. In any event she would have been quite capable of flinging at her father the cynical retort, "Da capo al segno."

In the darkness of the following morning Liszt departed, a broken man, his diplomacy in fragments, eight years of silence to come.

The wrong had bitten deep. None knew Liszt better than himself, but here was a reflection more magnified in its details, too accurate in its veracity, to be obscured. In the history of all that is greatest in Art, surely this eclipse was the most pitiful, the most sordid. Wagner had not it in him to learn from Liszt that "Génie oblige." Those bends sinister were blots in the 'scutcheon.

But soon there entered another of the personæ of this confused drama staged at Triebschen. Friedrich Nietzsche, broad-browed, short-sighted, garnished like a walrus, was then twenty-five years of age, half the age of Wagner, well enough read, perhaps too well read for his years and health, to become Professor of Classical Philology in the Univer-

sity of Basle. Having come across some of Wagner's writings, he determined to make acquaintance with the man whose thoughts seemed to coincide with his own, and the two met for the first time at the close of 1868. Thereafter followed correspondence, meetings, discussions, commissions, as long as the intimacy lasted. Whatever the cause that occasionally clouded his mental vision in the last ten years of his life (he died before dawn on August 25, 1900, aged forty-six) in his early life he was the most intellectual, the best informed man with whom Wagner ever had intercourse.[1]

As with von Bülow, as with everyone with whom Wagner came in contact, so now with Nietzsche. That dominating woman, Cosima, saw here a young man, an idolater, too myopic to detect the feet of clay, a master of clearness of style, an antidote to her paramour's involved ponderosities. It may well be imagined that Nietzsche, with the early honors of a university chair thrust upon him, with, besides, the youthful gift of inquiry and exploration which his special studies demanded, was fascinated by the several Epistles according to Wagner and made haste to seek out their author. In later years, it may be said in parenthesis, he was not wholly in agreement

[1] The most recent books referring to him are *The Lonely Nietzsche* (Heinemann, 1915), and *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence* (Duckworth, 1922), both from the pen of his sister, Elizabeth, who married Dr. Förster, a strange Utopian, who founded a colony in Paraguay, of all places in the world.

with the opinions of another writer of Epistles, better known as Paul. But with these we are not concerned.

From the first the Triebschen household recognized the value of Nietzsche...to themselves: where he stands now is another matter. But from what his sister allows us to know we gather that Nietzsche, prolific in ideas, but antagonistic to irregular unions, had to be pacified and humored by letting him feel himself indispensable by sundry commissions, by obstinate demands for visits. It must be remembered that Nietzsche's home in Basle was a good sixty miles from Lucerne, in those days not easily covered under four or five hours, and Nietzsche, for all his hero-worship, could ill afford interruptions during his Course of Lectures.

It was Cosima's will that he should be to her a cicisbeo, in the good sense. Upon him poured orders for Christmas presents, gifts, books, toys, even dolls' houses, with special instructions for some crying necessity like an *article de Paris*.

But this was but as a mask to conceal the deeper intention. With his learning he was the source to be tapped, more fresh and clear than the turgid and opaque drench that spluttered from Wagner's pen.

Much has been made of Nietzsche's "insanity," with his writings as "proof," incomprehensible as they are to many. But, to dismiss a distasteful subject, all that need be said is that he had a "stroke," which unfortunately for him and his friends kept his body fettered by unresponsive muscles, while his mind, when not bedrugged, had yet strength and

vigour to break forth from its prison. At this time, however, this young professor, steeped in all that was most lucid in classical literature, had a mind well balanced, and on this account he was absorbed into the Triebschen circle, encouraged to talk, with two pairs of ears attent to capture all that fell from him.

Two years later, in a letter of Nietzsche's, part of which has been torn off, it is more than hinted that Wagner was not above appropriating his thoughts. It is a pity that when he was at it Wagner did not copy his simplicity of style, his words sweetly placed. To put it plainly, Wagner was afraid: in his heart he knew this young professor as his better, but he could not brook any shadow that fell betwixt the wind and his nobility. Deep down there was a consciousness that he had met his master, and Nietzsche was to be broken into the service of the Wagnerian cause. But Nietzsche, for all his idolatry, was beginning to sum up his god. He had his own work to do, vast as it was, connected with his university chair, and he could not undertake long journeys at the beck and call of the ravisher of his brains. With his deeper knowledge he could not subscribe to the long-winded, superficial outpourings of the tenant of Triebschen. He knew too much.

It was this " too-muchness " that affected the printing of the first sheets of *Mein Leben*. At the beginning of December, 1869, Wagner sent to him " a large package of valuable manuscript " of which the printer was to receive installments from time to time. Twelve (in capitals in a line by itself) copies only

were to be struck off, and Nietzsche was to correct the proofs. Some notion of the unreasonableness of this commission may be gathered from the fact that the English edition is little short of nine hundred pages. But the task of proof-correcting was to be trebled by the fact that the printer, Bonfantini, was an Italian who did not know German. The type-setting, indeed, had to be done by the eye, and not by the sense of the text, just as our compositors have to do when dealing with an Oriental script. The number of printer's errors, therefore, must have been immense.

All this is very significant when the relation between Nietzsche, Wagner, and Cosima is taken into account. We may put aside as wholly unworthy the intention of thrusting upon Nietzsche so heavy a burden as to cause him to resign his chair, which he could ill afford to do, in order to devote himself entirely to the service of Wagner. Nevertheless, Wagner was exacting: it was an "indiscretion" to refuse an invitation to Triebschen.

On the first page of this Autobiography, according to Nietzsche, there appeared the words which have given rise to the controversy about Wagner's paternity. It will never be revealed whether Nietzsche actually did see the statement in the first person that Wagner was "the son of Ludwig Geyer, the actor."[1]

[1] The point is discussed more fully in the Appendix, "The Paternity of Richard Wagner."

But the sequel may enlighten us, not only on this point, but also on the veracity of many statements about people then living whom Nietzsche would be meeting. This probably occurred to Cosima when she read the first printed pages and appreciated the risk of letting Nietzsche see too much. So after the first quire the manuscript was taken out of Nietzsche's hands, and the rest sent direct to the Italian printer.

Considerable doubts have arisen as to the authenticity of parts of *Mein Leben,* the publication of which was withheld for forty years, a manœuvre in itself enough to cause suspicion in view of the many statements about persons no longer alive to contradict them. If its contents were then exactly as they are to-day, Nietzsche would have been in a position to strengthen or challenge allusions and incidents, and to question people directly mentioned or even Wagner himself. This would have been dangerous and might have led to the law courts. It is likely that *Mein Leben* was a much shorter affair in its original form, for Wagner spoke of adding notes and dates as time went on. Perhaps, too, it was tinctured by other hands. Evidently Nietzsche did not get much further than the first dozen pages: he had other things to do, and Cosima must have uttered a sigh of thankfulness that Richard's indiscretion in passing the manuscript to Nietzsche had not led to untoward results. Nietzsche on his part had his own affairs to attend to, but Wagner never considered the extent to which his inordinate claims upon the time and

attention of his admirers interfered with and obstructed their work.[1]

Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Wagner was not crystal clear throughout. Deeply versed as he was in his subject, his was too critical a mind to be overwhelmed by the welter of phrases, irresponsible, often contradictory. Wagner was fond of the word "philology," but never did he apply it correctly: word-worshiper that he was, his pose was to talk glibly of the things that Nietzsche had to know as a teacher, and the younger man, carried off his feet by rare association with a great musical genius, was too discreet, too well-mannered, to put the master to rights. It was a priceless experience to be in communion with a man who, while his conversation could at times be more than distasteful, yet had the vivacity and alertness to seize a point, though often his choice was incongruous and erratic.

Wagner, too, was faring well, for he was encountering a mind better co-ordinated than his own: he had not "gone through the mill" as his friend had; but he demanded all of Nietzsche as a scholar, just as he demanded all of the idolaters who knelt at his feet.

But the time was near when Nietzsche with all his loyalty was to be true to himself. He was to

[1] When *Mein Leben* was published *Simplicissimus,* an outspoken satirical paper, inserted a caricature in which Fafner, the dragon, was represented as holding his nose and turning away from the book which lay on the ground, while a diminutive Wagner scuttled up a ladder out of the cave.

find himself an austere onlooker, in an atmosphere somewhat different from the gentle breezes that invigorated the homestead at Triebschen.

Across the lake stood Mont Pilatus with its eternal mantle of snow, and the icy winds that swept down searched every nook and cranny of the villa, just as, during the closing days at Triebschen, a more inexorable wind was to search the hearts and minds of those that dwelt therein, to rend to tatters the curtain that had hid so many lurking secrets.

What music was being created during this period will be discussed later.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: WAHNFRIED

WITH Liszt's secret visit to Triebschen there came about a new understanding, unconventional, to give it the kindest word, but in his eyes without palliation. How far he was influenced by his Fürstin Carolyne we can gather to some extent from the vein of religiosity that runs through his letters to her. It is more than pathetic to think of this fine artist, on the verge of sixty, having to report to his exacting correspondent that he was saying his prayers every morning. When he was at it he might have left behind him at Triebschen one of his *Anges Gardiens,* who were never far away, to keep an eye on Cosima, for on June 6, 1869, Siegfried was born. Writing from Munich on July 24, von Bülow made the dry remark (p. 304)[1] that his wife had left him and was in Switzerland with the children. Then he goes on to speak regretfully of the artistic and honorable position which he had secured at Munich through Wagner's friendship, but that morally and materially it was impossible to maintain it.

Liszt on August 31 (p. 225) just casually mentions, " Un enfant né à Triebschen en Juin, porte le nom de Siegfried. . . . Hans est encore à Berlin. . . . Tous les enfants sont à Triebschen." (A child born at Triebschen in June, bears the name of Sieg-

[1] The figures in brackets refer respectively to the volumes of the *Briefe* of von Bülow and of Liszt quoted in the preceding chapter.

fried. . . . Hans is still at Berlin. . . . All the children are at Triebschen.)

It was in the same month that Richter, who was to have conducted the first performance of *Das Rheingold,* flatly refused to do so because of the inadequacy of the scenery. Wagner upheld him by sending a telegram to the bewildered Intendant of the Munich Opera House, Perfall, with the stinging words, "Schlechtigkeit, Niederträchtigkeit, Unfähigkeit"—(Liszt, p. 225)—vileness, malice, inefficiency—words which must have taken aback the telegraph clerk in Munich, if he was reading the newspapers in their expansion of the incident into all the importance of an "affair." By order of the King Richter was suspended for insubordination, but the case was strong, for it will be remembered that there is no break in the music, and the changes of scenery must be accurately synchronized with the score. Here, as elsewhere, as we have seen, Wagner was dependent upon the machinist, and the postponement of the first performance from August 29 to September 22, 1869, was entirely due to his demanding "effects" which in those days were not to be thought of. Liszt, who was in Munich for the first performance, wrote to his Fürstin on August 24 (p. 223) that von Bülow was in Berlin starting the machinery for the divorce, an action which neither he nor the lady could countenance, though he was silent on the subject and did not interfere.

The decree of divorce was pronounced on July 18,

1870. The marriage of Wagner with Cosima, the divorced wife of von Bülow and the daughter of Liszt, took place on August 25 in the Protestant church of Lucerne, Cosima having renounced the religion of her father in order to have an easier conscience. It could not have been pleasant for Liszt to write on September 11: "Did you know of the marriage of Cosima? I only learned of it from the newspapers, eight days later. Cosima hasn't written to me for over a year" (p. 265). Of *Das Rheingold* he was to speak always in most enthusiastic terms, but he makes the disturbing remark, "Il n'y a pas à chicaner Wagner sur des longueurs—mieux vaut se grandir à sa mesure!" (We can't quarrel with Wagner over the dull passages—better were we to rise to his height.) So he, too, was aware of them, but was he asking for an audience composed entirely of Wagners? He had taken Wagner's "measure" in another sense when writing of the visit to Berlin, early in 1871. He said (p. 295) he believed that Wagner would be wise not to slacken the chain of intimacy with Ludwig, adding, "if only to let it be forgotten that he has already strained it overmuch." The visit was a success: Wagner was received by Bismarck, but not by the newly created Kaiser and Kaiserin, although the concert was given in aid of a charitable institution (Wilhelmstiftung) which bore the Kaiser's name.

But let us go back a little. At the beginning of January, 1870, the lead-pencil sketch of *Götterdäm-*

merung was begun.[1] With this concluding part of his immense work in hand Wagner was becoming not a little anxious about its production as a whole. He had been seeing it on so broad a scale that he was wondering what stage would be large enough or equipped with the necessary appliances so that his "effects" would not become fiascos.[2]

Then there was the orchestra, and space to be found for its accommodation. How, then, did "the Bayreuth Idea" become evolved—"Der Gedanke von Bayreuth" as it was called? According to Glasenapp (IV, 324-325), it was by a pure accident. In March, 1870, in his search for an Opera House Wagner had the luck, in turning over the pages of some lexicon or gazetteer, to come across an article entitled "Bayreuth." He discovered that there was an old opera house there, with a very large stage, and this he thought would suit him. It is to be noted that his mind was wholly concentrated on the theater; situation, lines of communication, climate, accommodation, were of secondary consideration. Gradually

[1] Glasenapp (vol. iv, 449) gives a table of the "authentic" dates of the beginning and ending of this work in the three stages of pencil sketch, orchestral sketch and full score. Apparently there was an interval of a year between the completion of the orchestral sketch of Act I, and the beginning of the first pencil sketch of Act II. The musical part of the work, from first to last, occupied five years all but six weeks.

[2] In Italy there were to be found at one time little flasks—fiasci or fiaschetti—whose stoppers consisted of busts of Wagner. One was seen in a shop in Florence by Sir Alexander Mackenzie and was in his possession for some time.

the Idea took shape. Bayreuth happened to be exactly where he wanted to found his theater. Geographically it was off the chief tourist routes, or at least there was so little to be said for it then that nobody thought it worth while to get off the train to have a look at it. Then it was not too close to large towns with their operatic cliques and perpetual intrigues; it was in Bavaria, a compliment to Ludwig, who naturally would have to finance the scheme of the Opera House; it was, further, a place where Wagner could work in peace, free from importunate visitors, and accessible only to those whom he had to see specially in connection with his productions.

A year, however, was to elapse before definite steps were taken to develop the Bayreuth Idea, for Wagner had other matters in hand. There was his marriage with Cosima, at the very moment when the German armies were over-running France. He felt himself avenged for the insult of the Parisians, nine years before. He was one of those who were infected by the virus of delirium which greeted the humiliation of France and blinded Germany as a nation to the doctrine of self-control.

Nietzsche meanwhile could not look on. As a Swiss subject he was neutral, but he obtained permission to volunteer for service and was attached to a German ambulance, with which he lived through those days of a despairing France.

The centenary of Beethoven's birth, December 16, 1770, fell during this excited period, but Germany was too triumphant to notice it. Wagner, however,

took up the cry that was to claim for Germany the supreme leadership in that which the world at a later day came to abhor in its disguise as "Kultur."

From that moment he became a changed man. "There was a vulgar quality in his joy," said Halévy,[1] possibly with *Eine Kapitulation* in mind.

By this time the Bayreuth Idea was crystallizing and being discussed in season and out. Wagner deemed that the hour had struck when, with the widespread enthusiasm for all things German, he could carry the Bayreuth, or rather the Wagenerian scheme on the top of the wave. The great mission was to be accomplished by the organization of Wagner-Vereine all over Europe and America—societies to collect funds sufficient to launch Bayreuth as a practical design. Whosoever is to be credited with the initiative for suggesting the Vereine, there is no questioning the fact that Tausig took a leading part, and the plan of constituting a guarantee fund, to be subscribed to by "patrons" was his. When barely in his thirtieth year death robbed him of the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of his labors.[2]

From what we now know of Wagner we need not be surprised that with all his contempt for "virtuosi" he was not above accepting their interest or utilizing their services for his own ends. As guarantors Liszt

[1] Daniel Halévy: *The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche:* English translation by J. M. Hone, London, 1911, p. 96.

[2] Glasenapp, iv, p. 362.

and Tausig, both pianists, unexpectedly found themselves in company with the Sultan of Turkey!

Although Nietzsche was frequenting Triebschen and in a sense was sharing his thoughts and projects with Wagner, the Wagner, drunk with the German successes, was not the Wagner of old. We may not be far wrong in assuming that with his horse-play mind he showed *Eine Kapitulation* to Nietzsche, who was sure to be revolted. Aristophanes, forsooth! And there were other flamboyancies too chauvinistic to be in the best of taste. His God—with how much devotion Nietzsche looked to him with his troubled eyes we shall never know—his God...with his can-cans! Later, in the Autobiographical Notes[1] written in 1878, these words may be read,—"The War: my profoundest affliction, the burning of the Louvre." It was the destruction of things beautiful, things only to be held imperishable because they were enshrined in the minds of men who had known them and had been inspired by them—therein lay the hurt.

Although he volunteered to take part in the propaganda by lecturing, Wagner preferred to have him by him. He mistrusted his theories and his eloquence as much as Nietzsche was conscious that a war-awakened nation was not ready for a new garb of thought. As he was to say later, "Wherever Germany's influence extends, it *corrupts* culture. It was the Franco-Prussian War that 'redeemed' the intellect of

[1] Halévy, p. 115.

France!"[1] And this a few lines after his words: "The few instances of real culture that I have come upon in Germany have all been of French origin; above all, Frau Cosima Wagner, by far the best authority on matters of taste that I have ever known." These were his opinions in 1888, but still in the 'seventies with all he knew of the outward manifestations and inner expressions of German thought, he shuddered at the disastrous effect of too sudden a change.

To Triebschen he was still loyal: perhaps he was more often there than he had been at any other period. It was a heartbreak when in the spring of 1872 he stood in the dismantled rooms, amid the dust and rubbish, the boxes and packing cases, that too significantly announced the removal to Bayreuth.

In April, 1871, Wagner and Cosima went to Bayreuth to look about for themselves. But the opera house upon which Wagner had set his heart would have needed so much internal reconstruction that another plan had to be tried. The pair were enchanted with the little town, and it did not seem so wild a dream that here they might find their abiding place. By the end of the year there were consultations about a site for the theater to be built according to Wagner's conceptions, and a plot of ground was discovered where a convenient house could be built. Those with whom he had to deal were not insensible of the benefit to the town which would accrue from the pres-

[1] *The Lonely Nietzsche,* by Frau Förster-Nietzsche; London: Heinemann, 1915, p. 357.

ence among them of a man associated in the newspapers with their king, Ludwig II, though the "principals" in the transaction knew nothing about Wagner beyond this. At this time we may be sure that the man who was deriving most profit from the great project was the local bookseller, sworn to secrecy. At no time of his life, and at no spot on the globe, could Wagner have been "read" more assiduously and furtively than in that year, when the magistrates and lawyers and bankers in Bayreuth were busy devouring everything about the new visitor that was in print, so that they might have some of his phrases on tongue-tip, though for the life of them they had not the ghost of an idea what they meant!

On April 22, 1872, Wagner left Triebschen for Bayreuth, to be followed soon after by his wife and the Bülow-Wagner family. He took up his quarters in the Hôtel Fantaisie, in the grounds of the Schloss Fantaisie, four miles out from the town. This delicious name was a forecast of the fantasies that were to play joyously over the Wagner household in the halcyon days to come.

As for Bayreuth itself, we have to consult the *Biblion Peregrinorum,* Baedeker no less, for the year 1883, the year in which Wagner died. Here, for once, Baedeker erred. The Wagner Theater has not that mark of distinction, the asterisk (*); not even the *House,* Rennweg 283½. That half! Oh, Richard!

The foundation stone of the theater was laid on Wagner's birthday, May 22, 1872, in a downpour of

rain. As the moment was opportune for reconciliation Wagner sent an invitation to Liszt, studied in its courtesy and affection. Four weeks earlier, however, Liszt had written to his Fürstin that his mind was made up—he would not go to Bayreuth. This is significant, and would seem to indicate that the Countess, in anticipation of the function, had demanded of Liszt a pledge that he would not attend it. In spite of all her bondieuseries there was vindictiveness about the woman. She was determined to keep Liszt and Wagner apart. She was ever attempting to shelter her own delinquencies with Liszt behind the Wagner-Cosima irregularities which were now of the past and should have ceased to be a target for irresponsible stone-throwing. The quiet student of the "passages" between Liszt in Weimer and his Countess in Rome—she scribbling thousands and thousands of pages on any historical-pastoral-canonical-ecclesiastical subject—must have been betrayed into a cynical smile when the upshot was that the irrepressible dévote found her masterpieces banned in the *Index expurgatorius*. On Liszt's face there must have been a world of meaning when he heard of this, perhaps just the faintest flicker of amusement.

Liszt's reply to Wagner well became him as a man and an artist, but the insatiable Fürstin had to see copies of the correspondence.

At the beginning of September Wagner asked if he and Cosima might not come to Weimar on a visit, provided that this would not embarrass Liszt. The visit was not unwelcome. Here again Liszt had to

counter the opposition of his *âme damnée* by thanking her for her kindness to his daughter, adding, " Cosima est bien ma terrible fille, comme je l'appelais autrefois, une femme extraordinaire et de haut mérite, fort au-dessus des jugements vulgaires, et parfaitment digne des sentiments admiratifs qu'elle inspire à ceux qui la connaissent—à commencer par son premier mari Bülow! Elle s'est devouée d'un enthousiasme absolu à Wagner . . . et sera son salut, car il l'écoute et la suit avec clairvoyance." (Cosima is indeed my terrible daughter, as I used to call her, an extraordinary woman and of great merit, far above vulgar opinions, and perfectly worthy of the sentiments of admiration with which she inspires those who know her—starting with her first husband Bülow. She is absolutely and enthusiastically devoted to Wagner . . . and will be the saving of him, for he listens to her and follows her with intelligence.)

The visit was paid, and returned by Liszt in October, who was gratified to find Wagner in happy surroundings.

Although the house was not yet ready, the spirit of " Wahnfried " must have been over Liszt in those three days at Bayreuth, perhaps the most serene that he was ever again to enjoy. Passing over the usual dreary bulletin, we find him writing " Wagner vit très retiré. . . . Nous sommes restés completement seuls à trois. Les 5 enfants dînent à part—ils sont parfaitement élevés et singulièrement charmants. Cosima se surpasse! Que d'autres la jugent et la condamnent—pour moi elle reste une ame digne du *gran*

perdono de St. François [a *placebo,* surely this!] et admirablement ma fille!" (Wagner is living in seclusion. . . . The three of us are quite alone. The five children dine by themselves—they are perfectly brought up and singularly charming. Cosima surpasses herself. Let others judge and condemn her—to me she remains a soul worthy of the great forgiveness of St. Francis and admirably my daughter.)

Meanwhile the cause was advancing. Contributions were flowing in from all sides and the theater and Wahnfried were increasing in stature. *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger* were marching triumphant and the new weald of sound which Wagner had created was bourgeoning.

Then suddenly a bolt which Wagner, when an unknown man, had flung into the blue eighteen or nineteen years earlier, was retrieved by him and primed with a still deadlier charge. His *Aufklärungen über das Judentum in der Musik*[1] had been reprinted in 1869 with additions and notes in the collection of his *Prose Works.* The moment was singularly ill chosen. When von Bülow saw the text he exclaimed, "Herrje, wird das ein Halloh geben!" (That will raise a shindy!) and it did! Adler in his Lectures pointed out that five of the writers whom Wagner had singled out for attack because of their hostility towards his music, were not Jews. It was so like Wagner, with Cosima the granddaughter of a Jew, to republish a

[1] Guido Adler : *Richard Wagner, Vorlesungen gehalten an der Universität zu Wien.* Leipzig, 1904, p. 187.

pamphlet injuring the very community which was largely the prop that was sustaining his house, and this at a time when he would have accepted contributions from anyone, irrespective of creed.

The counter-attack sprang from an unexpected quarter, and Liszt referred to it in November, 1872. He was sending to the Fürstin a critical and psychiatrical article by Hanslick (one of those stigmatized by Wagner and spoken of by Adler as not a Jew) in which Hanslick had demonstrated, on the strength of a pamphlet by a brain specialist of Munich, " que Wagner est atteint d'une monomanie très connue—l'orgueil de soi-même. Ne serait-ce pas un souhaitable contrepoids à une autre monomanie plus répandue encore et fort accreditée—l'orgueil de sa bêtise?! " (Wagner is attacked by a well-known mania—pride in himself. Might it not be a desirable counterpoise against another monomania yet more widely spread and of ill repute, the pride of his stupidity?!)

For once Liszt allowed himself the fitting word.

The specialist was Dr. Th. Puschmann,[1] who must have been in the way of hearing a good deal about Ludwig and Wagner. In a footnote at the beginning of the pamphlet the publisher points out that the author does not make a conclusive (bestimmten) diagnosis of monomania, but only a broad generalization of the presence of a psychosis. From the date of

[1] *Richard Wagner, eine psychiatrische Studie* von Dr. Th. Puschmann, prakt. Arzt und Spezialist der Psychiatrie in München. Berlin: 1873.

Liszt's reference and the date on the pamphlet, it is very likely that the original article which Hanslick saw was of a more technical and searching nature, published in some medical journal, and reprinted at a later date in the form in which it now is.

Here we may leave Wagner as a "case" for the psycho-analysts. Of a surety Liszt put his finger on his weakest point, "sa bêtise." In his polemics Wagner usually lost: in his music he always won, and is still winning, but for all the divinity in his music, no one, when handling and mishandling words, was more stupid than he. To him well might the fragment of a post-classical poet have been applied,

> Iniurias audacter ineps effudit ineptes
> lingula, stultitias blateravit et invidiose.

(Audaciously the ineptitude of that little tongue of his poured forth inept insults, blethering invidious stupidities as well.)

The early years at Bayreuth were years of building, in two senses. The theater and Wahnfried demanded the closest attention, and while not engaged in the immense task of orchestrating *Götterdämmerung,* Wagner was active with his pen, sometimes wisely, sometimes obscurely, sometimes lost in invective and controversy. But we may now think of him in his threescore years, with all the crumples of his none too easy and complicated life smoothed out, in the placid if not sleepy atmosphere of Bayreuth.

We are approaching the Wagner as we should have liked him to have been throughout his life. We

should have wished him to have come into his own kingdom, not by trumpet-themes somewhat out of tune and ungrateful to the ear, roaring abroad lion-like, in pamphlet and newspaper articles, but by gentler modes in sucking-dove or nightingale fashion even. We have no forms to our own conceit to shape the artist as we would imagine him from a study of his works alone. And so the scrupulous historian, plowing his furrow through diaries and autobiographies, letters and reminiscences, is startled often enough out of his idealistic dreams, and brought to earth—and to print—by cold incontrovertible facts.

It can well be understood that Wagner in his new surroundings was urged by some force from within—it may have been from without—to exalt his music by scribblings which scarcely exalted himself. His music stands like a monument wrought out of brass for all time. Great works of art are beyond the impious fingers of ridicule: they can be besmirched in some careless afternoon, but next morning the faithful servitor wipes away the stain.

Of *The Ring* enough has been written. I plead *mea culpa* of the past. Of its visible absurdities, its scenic ineptitudes, its philosophic arguments, its dreary bars of musical accompaniment to nothing of any moment, enough has been said by others.

CHAPTER NINETEEN: A FESTIVAL IN LONDON

AFTER the last performances of *The Ring* in 1876 the captains and the kings departed, and Bayreuth was left to itself. The litter of paper was swept up, the army of waiters demobilized; the souvenirs were carefully laid by for the next opportunity, and the cautious householder took counsel with himself over a drastic revision of his tariff. He had been much too lenient: Bayreuth for one crowded hour had ceased to be Bavarian or even German: it had become cosmopolitan, and Cosmopolis as yet had not known her own time. That was to come.

So there was revision all round, even unto the railway time-tables. The spinsters and the knitters in the sun gossiped as of old when they had recovered from their bewilderment, but they kept a shut mouth on the subject of domestic economy. Yes, indeed, it was agreed that the illuminations had been splendid —who would have thought it?—and there were kings and princes in gorgeous uniforms in that short season, but the next time . . . ah! the next time. . . .

But at Wahnfried there was more *Wahn* than *Fried* when the bills put in their awkward and inconsiderate appearance. The elusive Rheingold had to be met by the gold that was *rein* and where was it to come from? Wagner had gone in pursuit of his ideal and had found it. What he had planned was his, and his alone, and he was not to be seduced by bribes from impresarios to part with his *Ring,* now

that he had fashioned it to his own conception. The Wagner Vereine were too dilatory: they were not "active enough in their enjoyment" as he meant them to be, and the overdraft was heavy.

In the following spring some one incautiously mentioned the Albert Hall: it could seat ten thousand people. It was thoughtless to dangle so alluring a bait before one whose grandiose ideas accepted omne ignotum pro magnifico. Perhaps the days of miracles were not quite past. So Albert Hall it had to be, with twenty concerts to begin with.

Concert-giving in the year 1877 was in its infancy: it had not been brought to the finish of a fine art by means to which music was altogether a secondary affair. With the exception of the Saturday and Monday "Pops" and the Philharmonic Society there was no experienced organization in London to be consulted or to advise. The Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts were part of a general scheme which served other interests as well.

The extravagant idea of twenty concerts was reduced to six, and to their preparation weeks instead of months were given. To Wagner it would be an event to conduct an orchestra of one hundred and seventy in a hall seating ten thousand people—a strange contrast with his experience of twenty-two years earlier, with his appearances in the Hanover Square Rooms, an orchestra of sixty and an audience of less than a thousand.

The scheme was pushed through hurriedly, and when Wagner alighted at Charing Cross Station on

May 1, 1877, he found all of Germany that London contained assembled to welcome him. The inevitable speech followed. Perhaps not all Germany, however: if there were absentees, Wagner had given good cause. There were rumors of anti-Wagnerian intrigue on the part of "Israel," as Glasenapp put it, "with Joachim at the head." But Dannreuther, with whom Wagner was staying, challenged a statement of Glasenapp's made in an earlier edition of his *Life,* by pointing out that the "German element" at no time was strongly in evidence, and, further, that the Germans in London were worshipers of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, while Wagnerians were the exception.

The "Festival," with Wilhelmj as leader, was mismanaged. Dannreuther was constrained to make it clear in self-defense that his only connection with the affair was the engaging of the extra wind players and the preliminary rehearsals. It is more than likely that he acted as interpreter for Wagner and Richter, who shared the conductorship.

Glasenapp gives interesting details which are worthy of note as showing what festival conditions were half a century ago. The orchestra consisted of twenty-four first and twenty-four second violins, fifteen violas, twenty 'cellos, twenty-two basses, six flutes, seven oboes (probably including one or more English horns), eight clarinets (probably including bass clarinets), seven bassoons (including double bassoon), eight horns, five trumpets, five trombones,

five tubas, six percussions, and seven harps. As for the expenses, Glasenapp's figures must be taken with caution in the light of present-day experience. He says that the cost of one concert was £3,000 in round figures, that each rehearsal, of which there were nineteen, came to £200, and that the bill for posters for one single day amounted to £50.

One fatal oversight went far to wreck the enterprise. The bondholders of the Albert Hall had been forgotten; the boxes and stalls were their private property, and these, to which they had the right of entry without payment, were empty. This was a blow in the face of those who had thought to make London pay for the deficit in Bayreuth. At the end of the third concert it was only too evident that the prospect was black. In spite of the enthusiasm of the audiences, it was gall to Wagner to look round and see vacant places on all sides. In despair he sent out an urgent "whip" to the German Vereine for subscriptions, and his state of mind can be understood by his threat to settle in America with his family if the Bayreuth debt, amounting to about £7,500, was not wiped out forthwith.

To make things worse, his singers failed him. At the fourth concert the tenor, Unger, who, according to Glasenapp, was taking liberties with his diet, was out of voice and inaudible; Hill, who was to fill the gap with Wotan's "Abschied," had gone home and in those sans-telephone, sans-taxi days had to be fetched in a hurry, while the concert agent had to

appear on the platform and announce the changes in the program.

Even the presence of the royal family and the patronage of Queen Victoria did not attract. (It is not generally known that King Edward was deeply read in Wagner's music.)

The "returns" of the last concert amounted to £1,600, but Glasenapp could not refrain from the infelicitous remark that the public in quite un-English fashion (ganz unenglisch) showed signs that the Wagnerian seed was sprouting.

A banquet followed at which Siegfried Wagner's health was drunk for the first time. There was also a distribution of medals, about which Liszt dryly remarked, "Entre autres bêtises qui se débitent sur Wagner, on a dit qu'il distribuait des décorations—et que d'innocentes médailles gravées en son honneur devaient être portées au cou avec ruban multicolore." (Among other stupidities retailed about Wagner, they say that he is distributing decorations—and that innocent medals inscribed in his honor are to be worn round the neck with a striped ribbon.)

Glasenapp goes out of his way to remark that Præger, "although *not* invited to the dinner, put in an appearance." But it was a public affair and the much-abused Præger had a right to be present, provided that he paid for his meal. Yet this was the man who was Wagner's shadow during the Philharmonic season, and of whom Wagner said, "He was with me in the desert." Wagner had sought out the others, Sainton and Lüders, and it would have been

a puerile slight to have ignored the third companion of 1855, who, after all, was the means of obtaining for him the Philharmonic engagement.

Two extra concerts were given which resulted in a profit of £750, and this sum was ear-marked for the Bayreuth deficit.

On Monday, June 4, Wagner left London.

Dannreuther, who could never have been far away from Wagner during his stay in London, with memories of Wagner's conducting of the *Ninth Symphony* when the foundation stone of the theater at Bayreuth was laid in 1872, remarked that at the Albert Hall he "did not do himself justice. His strength was already on the wane. The rehearsals fatigued him, and he was frequently faint in the evening. His memory played him tricks, and his beat was nervous. Still there were moments when his great gifts appeared as of old."

Not to strain the point we may conclude that at this time with all the burden of a debt of some thousands weighing upon his mind, chagrined by the financial results of the "Festival," and by no means buoyed up in hope by the enthusiasm with which he was greeted, Wagner was out of touch with himself, even with his music. It is said that in earlier days his "readings" of Beethoven were unforgettable, but in spite of the strain of Bayreuth and London he was far from being a broken man. The divine fire was not quenched, for while in London he read to his friends the text of *Parsifal.* It was well in his mind, for a month or two later he was writing to Liszt for infor-

mation as to the ceremonial to be followed in the Grail scene.

He was still the master of his art, the supreme craftsman, the dauntless pioneer. *Parsifal* was yet to be composed.

IT was in Venice, unexpectedly, that Wagner was to draw his last breath. The entire household was wintering there in 1882, in the Palazzo Vendramini-Calergi, let to Wagner by the Duke of Grazia, who had inherited it from his mother the Duchess of Berry. The entresol consisting of a large number of rooms was occupied by the Wagner establishment, and was let for the year at what Liszt called the "modique prix" of 6,000 francs—in our money £240—and no surérogatoire, or premium, as we should say, an exceptional favor for those who lodged in old palaces.

The Palace is a beautiful example of Renaissance architecture and was built by Pietro Lombardo in the year 1481. Some years before Wagner came to occupy a portion of it, it had been described as one of the "sights" of Venice. The motto on its front was "Non Nobis,"[1] two words which Wagner, had he been the Latinist that his friends tried to make him out, might have understood as singularly inappropriate to one of his passionate and self-willed life.

Perhaps Liszt, arriving at the end of November, 1882, glanced upward from his gondola at the inscription, and with the injunction in mind to study Latin, recalled the rest of the line in which the words occur.

[1] Non Nobis, the Latin words which begin Psalm 115, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

So while in comfortable quarters, and seeing no more of the Wagner family than was necessary, he may have smiled to himself at the biting irony of Wagner at last installed in a palace—one, moreover, with that motto. Liszt left Venice in the early weeks of January, 1883, none too happy in his growing blindness, possibly saddened by some inauspicious moments, and aging with indifference.

In January Wagner was drawing up the cast for *Parsifal,* and was proposing to include in it a lady who had come to him the year before with a letter of introduction from Nietzsche. She had a magnificent voice and Wagner was captivated, but for some reason which has not been disclosed, her engagement provoked the hostility of the family, who were adamant in their resolve that the lady should not appear. There was a heated argument: Wagner lost his temper, and all was over.

Such was the account of Lacassagne in his book,[1] without, however, giving his authority. Lacassagne mentioned the lady by name—she was not German or French—but there are no references to her in any of the biographies of Wagner. When in the autumn of 1924 I read this startling statement for the first time, I attempted to get in touch with the author to ask him if he would be kind enough to supply the source of his information. The reply was a mourning card announcing that his death had just occurred.

[1] A. Lacassagne: *A Green Old Age,* English translation from the second French edition, London, 1923, p. 235.

In his day Lacassagne was the leading authority on medical law in France; and in his professional capacity occupying the chair of legal medicine in the Medical Faculty of Lyons, must have been called upon constantly to decide questions of life and death. A man of his standing, therefore, would scarcely have committed himself to a statement of this kind without being sure of his evidence.

Although it is in conflict with the "official" accounts of Wagner's last days, these accounts are over-circumstantial in their details, and create the feeling that there was something to be concealed. As we shall see presently there can be no doubt that some "incident" of the kind did occur, but not on the date specified by Lacassagne. The probability is that he was summing up the available evidence and condensing it, but the allusion to the mysterious lady still lacks corroboration.

Let us now turn to the "official" accounts, always remembering the possibility of their having been amended by Wahnfried.

After Liszt's departure the cast for *Parsifal* was considered. We are not told that it was a final draft, but Glasenapp in his sixth volume refers *in two places*[1] to Wagner's letters of January 14 to Heckel. Wagner's words are, "Ich ärgere mich über nichts mehr."[2] Still later, on page 771, *again in two places* Glasenapp

[1] *Das Leben,* vi, pp. 750 and 754. In the footnote on the latter page the year 1882 is a misprint for 1883.

[2] I am not going to get angry about things any more.

quotes the words. Why these four references to Wagner's admission that he had lost his temper? Is not the conclusion sound that Glasenapp or his informant attached great importance to the fact?

On Sunday, February 4, Levi, who had been undergoing a "cure," arrived in Venice. His presence was important since he, as one of the conductors at Bayreuth, would need to know what the arrangements were for the summer season. We are given to understand that Wagner expressed his satisfaction that Materna had been engaged for the part of Kundry in *Parsifal.*

Glasenapp next makes Wagner's doctor, Dr. Keppler, responsible for a description of what happened during the evening of Saturday, February 10. Keppler says that on this evening between six and seven o'clock he found Wagner in a state of unusual excitement in consequence of a conversation that he had had with Levi. Glasenapp, however, qualifies this with the remark that the excitement was not due to the conversation, but to the fact that Levi's ill-health had put him in a bad humor. The doctor found Wagner in appearance rather better than he had been in the last few days. What we should like to know is whether Cosima was present during the conversation.

To continue Keppler's narrative. In this excited state Wagner declared that it would benefit his agitated frame of mind if he could get away for a little from the monotony of his existence in Venice, and take Siegfried with him. Keppler approved,

and it was decided that on Monday a short trip was to be made to Verona or Bologna.

On Sunday the 11th, the doctor remarked that Wagner was astonishingly well in comparison with the condition in which he was on the preceding day, and the trip was discussed, provided that the weather improved. Unfortunately it poured all day. In wet weather Wagner was usually fidgety, and on this occassion the more so, as he was anxious to have a complete change from his present environment. In the afternoon he made up his mind to have a walk in the fresh air, and alone, but he returned to the Palazzo within ten minutes, clearly in a bad temper. By the evening he had become calm again.

It is difficult to understand Glasenapp's emendation. Levi's ill-health might have caused Wagner some concern, for he was relying upon him to superintend the rehearsals at Bayreuth. It is far more likely that the subject of conversation was of a nature to rouse Wagner to anger. What was the subject? Wagner's fits of temper were well known, but it would appear that he was still harping on some incident in which his wishes had been thwarted, otherwise there was no point in Glasenapp's dwelling upon his conduct in this respect.

Perhaps Keppler, who understood Wagner's physical condition, was seeking for some cause which was to account for the suddenness of Wagner's death two days later. With so headstrong a patient, determined to manage his affairs for himself, it must have been difficult for those in contact with Wagner to see that

he did not overtax his strength. Keppler must have suspected the state in which Wagner's heart was, and it was his bounden duty, as well as the duty of everyone in the household, to safeguard him from any unusual strain, and to keep silence on any subject which they knew would agitate him.

On Monday the weather did not clear up, and this, his last day, was spent with his family in the best of moods.

The narrative is now confided to Joukowsky, a young Russian painter, who had been "adopted" by the family. Wagner was so attached to him that he called him his son by his first marriage.

On Tuesday, February 13, Joukowsky[1] arrived as was his habit, at a quarter to two for lunch. For the first and only time he found Cosima at the piano and in tears. She was playing to Siegfried Schubert's *Lob der Tränen.* After a word or two a message came from Wagner to say that as he was not feeling very well the family might begin the meal quietly. Before she sat down, however, Frau Wagner went to her husband's room, and on her return reported that he had had a pretty severe paroxysm, but that he was better and so was left alone. Suddenly Wagner rang his little bell twice, and a white-faced maid burst into the room bidding Frau Wagner come at once, and telling Wagner's gondolier to fetch the doctor. Keppler arrived about three and the family

[1] Paul von Joukowsky designed the scenery and dresses for *Parsifal.*

felt reassured. Cosima was with Wagner. But about half an hour later the valet came sobbing into the dining room, and announced that it was all over.

There is no need to enter into the minute details given by Glasenapp of that last hour and a half in the Palazzo. Wagner would not have been the man he was if he had not been at pains to discover what his heart attacks signified, and at such moments he showed great courage in wishing to be alone, so that others should not be distressed by his sufferings.

It is in no irreverent spirit that we ask why Wagner, in his letter of January 14 to Heckel, should have referred to his anger, and why Glasenapp should have emphasized the point: we should like to know what passed between Wagner and Levi on February 10, and what justified Glasenapp in ascribing Wagner's excitement to a trifle not worth considering: and, finally, we should like to know if Cosima was with Wagner during the morning of the 13th, and why she was in tears when Joukowsky arrived.

On that last morning Wagner had said to his valet, "I must take care of myself to-day." When those in the room with him were putting things in order after the first confused moments, his watch slipped from his pocket and fell on the carpet. He said, "Meine Uhr!" These were his last words.

As far as can be ascertained there are no technical references in English to Wagner's illness and the cause of his death. In order to fill this apparent gap, especially after Lacassagne's statement, the fore-

going pages, along with the pages in Glasenapp's *Life* recording Wagner's last days, have been submitted to medical men for their opinion.

Although the evidence is in the form which might be expected of a layman, it nevertheless gives sufficient data from which a clinical picture can be constructed.

Glasenapp refers no less than *four times* to Wagner's " anger " on one separate occasion, but without describing what led to it. This repetition indicates that something very serious must have arisen, and it is clear that Wagner himself recognized the risk of losing his self-control. Possibly he had a warning that the state of his heart would not stand excitement. The letter to Heckel of January 14, 1883, contains nothing of importance except the words quoted on p. 239, and throws no light upon Wagner's odd remark.

During the interview with Levi on February 10 the conversation must have turned upon a matter of vital interest to Wagner, and one about which he felt so strongly that he wanted to get away at once from his surroundings—after a quarrel or disagreement? This, at any rate, is the report of Wagner's doctor, Keppler, who found him in a state of great excitement. Glasenapp, however, has ascribed the excitement to a cause which can only be regarded as frivolous, namely, Levi's ill-health. One problem remains unsolved: Was Keppler aware of the full significance of these attacks?

In the next two days, Sunday the 11th, and Mon-

day the 12th, heart attacks are mentioned with references to his excitability and bad temper, followed by a feeling of youthfulness and elasticity. (Glasenapp, VI, 770.)

On the fatal day, Tuesday the 13th, no reason is given for Frau Wagner's singular choice of song or for her visible emotion when Joukowsky arrived for lunch. Earlier in the day she may have had a conversation with Wagner which excited him. Something certainly must have happened to make a deep impression upon her. At the beginning of lunch Wagner sent a message that the family was to go on with the meal quietly, as he was feeling out of sorts. Frau Wagner went to his room, but returned in a minute or two, doubtless considering that the disturbance, whatever it was, was only temporary and would pass off as on other occasions. But this time it was fatal.

Thus, between January 14 and February 13, there are references to three occasions—two of which are definite—which lead to the conclusion that some subject was discussed sufficient in importance to cause Wagner great excitement, and on one of these occasions he resolved to break the monotony of his life in Venice, in other words, to get away from his family, taking Siegfried with him.

It is clear that the chain is nearly complete—mental irritation and excitement—heart attacks which pass off, followed by the sensation of great physical comfort. No drugs are mentioned, but hot fomentations were applied during the fatal attack. The now

recognized palliative, although known chemically long before 1883, had not yet been generally accepted as a drug, and its value in medicine was to be proved at a later date.

As Wagner recovered from earlier heart attacks it is comprehensible that the family did not think them serious, especially as they were followed, not by great depression, but by exhilaration and a feeling of well-being.

This result is so characteristic that, while it may allay the fears of those near the patient and give rise to false hopes, it is disquieting to the medical man, for he knows that he is face to face with angina pectoris.

The link in the chain required to make it complete is the topic of conversation which led to Wagner's excitement and "anger."

Did Lacassagne supply it?

SO far it has been felt necessary for our understanding of Wagner's work to see what light Wagner himself sheds on the matter. Had his been an unruffled, sheltered, blameless life it might have been the mirror of his music. It would be dangerous to speculate on the influences which in many another would have led inevitably to disaster: dangerous, indeed, for the temptation is great to identify the inner meaning with the outward aspect. In the past two thousand years no great work such as Wagner's is, has emerged from a mind so perverse in worldly things, but so consistent in upholding a great ideal. The marvel lies in its having been wrought just by the last man, who, judged by convention and tradition, would have been regarded as mentally capable of immense labor. But his music is not the greater because of his character: rather was it that there was more than a spark of the divine within him, secret, inviolate, something more quick than Cicero's mere scintilla ingenii, but sacred and guarded.

Others have had ingrained in their work the influence of their environment, and have revealed the man in the mannerisms of which they never could rid themselves. But while Wagner insisted—and was insatiable in his demands—upon purely physical stimuli, it is questionable if even his adventurings and propensities found their way into his music or affected it to any extent, with the possible exception of *Tris-*

tan. Even this had a legend for its basis, although it might be considered as intimately connected with a vital and personal experience.

So completely detached was his daily life from his music that he could pass from a world of bickerings and quarrels into a sublimated atmosphere of sound in which the musical thought was strangely at variance with the coarser surroundings which he had just left. No one could be more turbulent in his contact with his fellowmen: no one more serene in his music. There is no trace of bitterness, of invective, of the involved and labored accents of his pen when charged with controversy. It is difficult to associate the ethereal strains of the Prelude to *Lohengrin* with the rude music of rifle and cannon in the Dresden revolution. Yet not so long ago the dissonance was sharply and poignantly in our ears and minds.

In their attempts to analyze the mind of the artist, psychologists have conceived two broad classes: those whose minds are mainly intent upon and influenced by their surroundings—on things exterior to them—"extraverts," as they are called; and those who are more deeply concerned with the things appertaining to thought—"introverts."[1]

In the work referred to Wagner is indicated as a

[1] See *The Re-creating of the Individual* by Beatrice M. Hinkle, M.D., London, 1924. ("A Study of psychological types," p. 169, and p. 363 for the remark about Wagner.)

Let it be clearly understood that this word "introvert" is not to be confused with the word "invert" applied to persons who are mentally and morally unstable.

type of the first, expressing " his emotions freely, following phantasy, extravagance, and the play of his imagination, and the emotional introvert does the same, but in the opposite direction."

These assertions may be brought forward as summing up in current psychological terms much that has been set forth in this essay. But they do not explain all. We have seen Wagner in his outward circumstances, self-confident, noisy, ebullient, enthusiastic, combative, with fits of reaction and depression. We have seen him impatient when thwarted, indifferent to the feelings of others; we have seen him not in a very pleasant light in his extravagances, his love of luxury, in his impenitence where money was concerned, in his moral lapses and delinquencies—by no means the kind of person with whom we should care to associate or deal.

But just as his extraversion, his attitude to the world, soared to heights towards which the scrupulous would hesitate to venture, so also in his introversion, in his inner emotion, in his fantastic imagination, in his incandescence of thought, he reached depths unplumbed by mortal man before or since.

With our psychologists, let it be said, we have no quarrel, but only gratitude for leaving this aspect of the matter alone. Until they themselves are able from their own experience to analyze the steps that have led up to their having created something in art, they stand well among the unknowing multitude.

The fear is that the irresponsible, alert to seize upon trivialities as instances charged, as they would

have us to believe, with imponderable importance, may weigh, one against the other, the outward life of Wagner as he lived, with the inner life of Wagner as he thought and wrote. It was very true that his necessity knew no law, but it would be indefensible, nay, deplorable, were every artist to make a like claim.

It would be a death-blow to all art if the extraversion of Wagner, which he so blatantly displayed, were to be accepted as indispensable in others for the production of great works. It would put the Art of Music forever under a ban.

Yet, on the other side of things, no student of human nature will yoke the Wagner of the plush and silks and satins with the Wagner who discovered for us a new world in the marvels of sound, the Prelude to *Parsifal,* the opening bars of *Tristan,* the clean, upstanding chords of *Die Meistersinger.*

When the workings of man's mind shall have approached solution—not, indeed, in this generation or in many an age to come, it may be that the inscrutable mystery will stand forth into the light. Yet the fact remains that the music that has had the greatest influence upon the art since time was arose from the mind and thought of the man to whom these pages have been devoted. Against Wagner the Man there is no stone, in shape or texture, that might not be thrown. Against Wagner the supreme Artist let all stones be thrown, of which to erect a noble habitation for music, proof to all the winds of time. Dare it be

said that in his music Wagner shows us just what he was not in his life?

It is simpler to group together under one chapter heading the three masterpieces, *Tristan, Die Meistersinger,* and *Parsifal.* They do not come in chronological order, it is true; how Wagner was able to select and keep apart one work while he was composing another has been set forth in Chapter XIII. But these suggest a sequence which has a most worthy parallel, despite the years that intervened between the dawn of the one and the high noon of the last. Here we may remark the extraordinary gift of musical characterization that he displayed, unequaled by any composer who went before or has followed him. He never repeated himself, except once, in the happy touch of *Tristan* in *Die Meistersinger,* most appropriately as it arrived there. Moreover, the characterization was so pure, so distinctive, that but for a certain method of treatment, of orchestration, of harmonization, it would seem unlikely that the respective Preludes of *These Three* were by the same hand.

Others have described his method of working: let it suffice to say here that his mother-tongue was in a sense his orchestra, and that he was so permeated by the urgency of his words, unessential and complicated as they undoubtedly are in many a place, that he could divest himself of one mood, the *Siegfried* mood, as far back as 1848, to break off, lose himself in the *Tristan* mood, then steep himself in *Die Meistersinger,* and recapture *Siegfried* years later without a trace of

one or other. The supreme mastery of mind, this sleight of thought, if the phrase is permissible, can be compared with the sleight of hand of the juggler who toys with cannonballs and feathers as if they were sedate knives and forks. Wagner's was a brain "card-indexed." No matter the untidiness of the world around him, in his mind all was orderliness and composure.

But to *These Three,* if we do not err in our symbolism—for Faith there stood *Parsifal,* with all the significance of the Rite which it represents—or, according to another creed, parodies. "We do these things better," was the verdict of one who forgot, or did not know, that his Office, though now canonical, at one time was not far removed from a stage play or mediæval Mystery.

For Hope, there is the mainspring of all that was great in German art. But not alone in music, for Hans Sachs was only one of the many. Wagner, too, occupied with the sound of words, was blind to the effulgency of German art bequeathed to him and to us by Dürer, by Cranach, Vischer, Kraft, by innumerable artists before whom he ought to have bowed the knee in obeisance as the world still does. Of them he knew as little as of many a subject with which he embroiled himself. He was too much occupied with the fiction that he was destined to regenerate humanity, but while he extolled in *Die Meistersinger* all that was noble for German art, he overlooked an aspect of German art that was staring him in the face, blind and deaf as he was to all but his own concerns.

We come to "the greatest of these," Charity, or, in a better translation, Love. It is needless to give that miracle a name. It will remain the loftiest poem in sound ever conceived by man, until our brain cells undergo some change, some readjustment to a form of music to which even now immunity cannot be claimed.

Wagner, like Shakespeare, built his fabric upon foundations which others before him had wrought. Of the legend of *Tristan* there was ample material, beginning with the twelfth century, passing through the mind of Gotfrit of Strasburg,[1] through the *Tristant und Isalde* of Hans Sachs in 1553, to the collections and collations of a number of writers, mainly in Germany, though we must not forget our own Walter Scott. What Wagner did in *Tristan* he carried out in all his great works: he studied the key-note, and by absorbing every aspect arrived at a conception that was well knit. The twelfth-century *convenances* of Gotfrit, however, accepted in those far-off days, were hardly tolerable even to a class of mind like Wagner's, but he could not escape from his obsession of the magical element. It may be irreverent to point to the zoological curiosities in *The Ring,* but in *Tristan* who will deny the influence of toxicology[2] in the

[1] See A. Bossert's *Tristan et Iseult,* Paris, 1865 and 1902.

[2] Servières, in *Richard Wagner jugé en France,* p. 268, quotes Commetant as speaking of "les amours pharmaceutiques" of Tristan and Isolde.

Saint-Saëns was less biting. He called *Tristan* a "spectacle dans un fauteuil avec orchestre."

Love Philter and the whole trend of the drama? The magic in the love potion is part of a fairy tale: we accept it in its unreality because of the magic of the music. It was necessary, and Wagner was well advised to ignore the aspect of the legend in which Isolde is shown as a light o' love, and represent her as still unwed, though betrothed, and cast the plot in a more decorous vein.

Tristan stands now, and let us hope for years to come, the most sublime expression in music for love. To utter all that *Tristan* means, to repeat it, a new art must be created. In all his tribulations, his misunderstanding, his countless obstinacies, thwarted at every turn in his commerce with the world, his *dæmon* held him inexorably to his task as an artist, and through all he came. The amazing thing is that he had the detachment to make in music all the diversity of thought which millions of people have now interpreted in their own way. There is a compactness and consistency in the story which is purely human, well within the comprehension and experience of those who view it, and therefore its appeal is the more vital.

But why, we ask ourselves again and again, were his life and his work as the poles asunder?

He left Asyl, as we have seen, and ultimately found himself in Venice. But even there he was not free from surveillance. Fingerprints were not yet in fashion, but a melody can travel far, and so, too, a reputation. Venice in 1859 was not Italian, but Austrian, and a stranger, especially a Saxon exile, was suspect. So from Venice he had to go, with the treasure of

Tristan to be laid at the feet, as he would have us believe, and as she herself believed, of Mathilde Wesendonck. The work, now complete, enshrined her. So much of her was in it that even in her corporeal existence she became to him almost an hallucination. Whatever the subsequent terms of friendship, passion on Wagner's side had burned itself out in the music. Mathilde had served his purpose. None more than Wagner was "with unthankfulness assoiled." Though he was at pains to declare his disenchantment, she remained courageous and loyal to the end. Isolde she had been, and no work of art however exalted would shake her constancy.

In after years, according to an eye-witness,[1] there must have been many a tremor of the lip when she recalled with pride her part—if, indeed, it was hers—in the creation of *Tristan,* and a grave sadness when she found herself at Bayreuth scarcely recognized, merely one of the crowd. And yet she felt that she herself had been the "onlie begetter."

To the French mind, seeing things clear-cut and logical, Wagner during his lifetime and even later was something more than an obsession. Apart from the white-hot resentment at *Eine Kapitulation* and the scars left by the barbarities of 1870-71, the French were not alone in their apprehension of Wagnerian influence. Of Saint-Saëns Servières said on page 280 of his work already quoted, " Derrière la secte du

[1] Louis de Fourcaud : *Richard Wagner, les Étapes de sa Vie,* Paris, 1923, p. 328.

Wagnerisme il voit même apparaître le spectre Germanique." (Behind the Wagnerian cult he believed he saw appearing the Teutonic specter.) In the Preface to his *Harmonie et Melodie* (1885) Saint-Saëns himself said that he greatly mistrusted the spirit of sectarianism in music. Undoubtedly he was right, as time has proved. Wagner was a German through and through. Those who chattered about music being a universal language were taking, and are still taking, an unthinking, a superficial view.

They were absorbed in momentary enjoyment, and put aside, if ever they were aware of it, what Wagner throughout his life was bent on establishing and consolidating. In the opera house or the concert room they refused to be disturbed out of their pathetic contentment. But to Wagner his music was less an art than a weapon, and he bared the steel with a flourish in *Die Meistersinger.*

Others before him had gone to Hans Sachs and his times for a theme which, in their hands, was purely dramatic, without any national or political shadow lurking in the background. The earliest play in which he figures was called *Hans Sachs,* a comic opera, written by Adalbert Gyrowetz, probably about the year 1800. Then came Deinhardstein's comedy-drama with the same title, first performed on October 4, 1827, which attracted Goethe's notice to the extent that he wrote a prologue for it. There were several other versions, but the best known is Lortzing's, produced in Leipzig in 1840. Wagner was in Paris at the time, but it is scarcely possible that he never heard of

it. He may even have conducted it. In any case every incident in his text appears in one or other of these plays, but not always in the same relation to the character. The stolen poem, in manuscript, for instance, was supposed, in Lortzing's opera, to have been written by Sachs. In Wagner's it is composed by Walter, and Walter is the only character in *Die Meistersinger* that is not historical. All the others are in name, at any rate, characters who were contemporaries of Sachs.

Sachs himself, as we have seen, had his own *Tristant,* and it is interesting to note that in one of his many plays and moralities he had a character called Sewfriedt, a dissolute youth, not like Wagner's Siegfried, in which irregular amours were dealt with as Gotfrit had done.

In Sachs Wagner found a character after his own mind, but in the first draft Sachs was not so important a figure as he was afterwards to become. It may be pointed out that on the stage he is incorrectly " made up " as a fairly young man. In the text, when there is talk of a candidate, Kothner says that he must be a bachelor, whereupon Beckmesser says, " Perhaps a widower. How about Sachs? " Sachs was sixty-six when his first wife died, and eighteen months later he married again. His most celebrated poem is " The Nightingale of Wittemburg," that is, Luther, and there are plentiful references to the Reformation. Its opening words, "Wacht auf! " come in the last scene of the third act, the theme of which has already been heard in the Prelude to that act.

In going to the sixteenth century Wagner hoped to revive a Germany that was no longer in existence. Old Germany, he said, had a character of poetry and beauty which no longer was to be found in the contemporary period. Besides, Sachs was a name known wherever the German language was spoken, and his poems were to be reckoned by the thousand, and in numerous editions. Wagner's enthusiastic desire to recreate a Germany according to his liking led him to develop his national motives, and as he proceeded they grew stronger till in the last act the panegyric of Germany and German things reached its acme. Had he any idea of the incredible expansion of his work? He did not discountenance the performances of the works of his earlier period in opera houses, but he seems to have resisted the allurements of impresarios when he came to works more direct in their national appeal; he kept them within his own control, as he did in the case of *The Ring*. *Parsifal,* as we shall see, was in a different category.

Evidently Wagner had no mind or eye beyond immediate performance. In his day there were no complications of copyrights, "mechanical" rights, even of cinema rights. With the exception of excursions outside Germany, his greatest work was designed and destined for the people within her frontiers. It was to Germany, and Germany alone, that he addressed himself, buoyed up in the hope that from his efforts there would arise a great distinctive school of music, intimately reflecting German aspirations. Time has

not yet been for that: in art time dallies, and prolixities in history are not without their humor.

So the hopefulness of the message in *Die Meistersinger,* full of gladness as it is, has not yet evoked a worthy rival. Though primarily addressed to German audiences, the opera ultimately has secured recognition among peoples who disregarded or disdained Wagner's ideas of art mixed up with things that are not of art. At first the stumbling-block lay in the text, limited in its appeal, and not, like *Tristan,* of no age or clime. There was something more than a trace of national propaganda in the exhortation contained in the final speech of Sachs, appropriately as it occurred there. Shakespeare again and again expressed his intense love of England, but the conditions were different. Germany in the *Meistersinger* period was not the Germany of 1871, and Wagner's hatred of Prussia was ill-concealed. Still, he did for Germany through his music, and particularly through *Die Meistersinger,* what none but he could have done. He struck the chord: others less mighty took up the tune. It will be for another generation to assess his influence in the molding of Germany after 1871.

In later years the super-man had a long reach and by over-reaching lost his balance. What Wagner created was not so much a school of music as a school of thought. His grandiose ideas found a response not in the opera house but in the imagination of those who felt the world grown too small. Just as he himself lacked that sense of proportion, that *modus in rebus,* so in other arts there arose a dominating excess,

and ugliness reared her forbidding head. This could not have been what Wagner hoped for.

It was the music that triumphed in the end. It was upright and clean. Reference has been made to Wagner's unerring characterization: could there be greater contrasts than *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*? Take the Preludes alone: the one, glowing with a passion that ascends inexorably to a tense moment, to that extreme climax of delirium, to fall and fail from sheer exhaustion and die away: the other, sturdy, manly, packed with joyousness and sunshine, but not without a wistfulness. Yet different as was their outlook, the one followed the other almost inevitably, as if Wagner had been overwhelmed by the excess of emotion, and sought relief in a simple story: a strange pair, incredible. Truly of Wagner we might exclaim, "*Credimus quia incredibile*" (we believe because it is beyond belief).

Finally we come to *Parsifal*, which, in our outline, stands for Faith. As far back as the year 1845, when he was just thirty-six, Wagner's researches into the legend of the Grail led him to the thirteenth-century poem, *Parsifal*, by Wolfram von Eschenbach, who had borrowed from the French of Chrestiens de Troyes. In Lohengrin's "Narration," that character is made to declare that Parsifal is his father. As in *Tristan*, as in *The Ring*, he saturated himself in legend and tradition, transmuting and selecting till he saw his drama whole.

For thirty-five years or more the subject was in his mind, and it is probable that had we had it from him

in its earliest form we might have had a plot less austere. But throughout these years Wagner was building for himself, and, whatever the view taken of *Parsifal,* it became his abiding place. What, indeed, did he wish to convey? There are those who declare that the drama must be taken whole or rejected whole as regards the text. Others read into it Wagner's expression of his opinions on all manner of topics. He consulted Liszt about the ceremonial of a religious Rite: he symbolized his convictions about hunting—with bow and arrow: he lost himself in the maze of Eastern esoterics: was a free-thinker and dévot according to mood, and ran aground in Schopenhauer. His *perfervidum ingenium* knew no restraint: what he thought was just what the world must think. A supreme artist in music, he confused the issue by the vain assumption that he was supreme in most other things as well.

For our good fortune Wagner gave us *Parsifal.* Howsoever it is regarded, whether coldly and critically in the study as trespassing by more than a step across the fringe of blasphemy, or in the opera house or concert room as a deeply moving spectacle wedded to music of the utmost solemnity, it will bear witness to Wagner's supreme audacity on the one hand, and, on the other, to his sureness in stirring human emotion to its depths.

Audacious enough it was to put the Last Supper on the stage, to show us Kundry washing Parsifal's feet, drying them with her hair and anointing them, to present to our eyes the ceremony of baptism, to

bring before us the Holy Grail and the spear of Longinus at the Crucifixion. These to some are symbolic acts far too sacred to be associated with panoramas and stage properties. They can be pondered in solitude: in play-acting they can be revolting.

We do not care to know how profoundly Wagner was affected by the Mystery. We have testimony that in his mind music-drama was a thing apart, and that he could pass at will from the sordid affairs of life to the purity and exaltation of music, leaving the world behind him. We have just seen his attitude towards Frau Wesendonck when *Tristan* was finished. The virtue had gone out of him.

According to the records of his life he was the last man who ought to have written *Parsifal*: the paradox is not only that he did write it, but also that he encompassed it with so mystical a fabric that it ceased to be a literal and to many a painful representation, and appeared instead as unsubstantial as a dream.

In the music Wagner was by no means past his prime. The opening bars of the Prelude, throbbing with antagonistic rhythm, produce an atmosphere of remoteness and mystery as the theme of the Sacrament or Eucharist approaches. The sure hand was here, without hesitancy. Inconsistently as he reproached others for constructing their overtures and preludes of thematic material which would appear later in their operas, he sinned here, as in his other works, against his own doctrines and authority. Technically the Prelude to *Parsifal* is as much a potpourri as the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* or to

Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel.* It was only in the Preludes to *Lohengrin* and *Tristan* that Wagner showed how well he knew himself to build the lofty rhyme and develop a single theme as Bach had done. In *Parsifal* we have one theme after another, foreshadowing what we are to hear, but these themes have a solemnity and dignity which place them in an isolation that was necessary, so that when they recurred they could be associated with definite moments in the dramatic scheme.

To some the message of *Parsifal* stands for Faith: to some it is an intrusion on forbidden ground. At every turn we are confronted with perplexities in Wagner's character. Of the man in his private life, of the pamphleteer and turgid poet, of the supreme master of music—the whole story is yet to be told. But it is to the last that we most willingly render homage. We release our minds in the flood of sound, careless about what he meant, more solicitous about and concerned with the magician who captures and enthralls us by the spell of his music.

APPENDIX A

WAS WAGNER A "CLASSICAL SCHOLAR"?

WAGNER'S reputation as a classical scholar has been built up by friends who in their ignorance imagined that because he talked about Greek and the Hellenic drama he must of necessity have had a profound knowledge of the language. Hitherto, in English at any rate, this matter has not been investigated, but it is of importance that it should be, as shedding light upon Wagner's discursiveness upon the subject.

In the chapter, "An Homeric—and Wagnerian—Myth," his "translation" of the first twelve books of the Odyssey has been dealt with, and students of the Classics may read between the lines and form their own conclusions.

For English students the literary dishonesty of William Ashton Ellis is flagrant: he let it go forth that in the archives of the Kreutzschule there was an entry "to confirm the tale" of this stupendous work of a boy of thirteen wholly ignorant of Greek grammar, and deliberately used an expression which altered the meaning of the original German by allowing it to be understood that there was proof of the translation in the archives. It may be pointed out once more that according to Glasenapp there was nothing else in the archives than a statement "informing us of his diligence."

It is the supercherie of Ellis that has created the fiction.

But on the assumption that Wagner was pre-eminent among the classical scholars of the day, let us take the evidence.

The only witness is Wagner himself.[1]

Then we have Chamberlain asserting that "of all the really great masters of the musical art Wagner is the only one who enjoyed a thorough classical education." This of the boy who threw away his grammar in disgust!

Mendelssohn may not count as a "really great master," but his thesis for matriculation at the University of Berlin was a translation of the *Andria* of Terence, and at a later date there came translations from the Italian of Dante and other poets, all of which versions are in print.

The most recent book in English on the subject is Pearl Cleveland Wilson's *Wagner's Dramas and Greek Tragedy*.[2] In this work the above quotation from Chamberlain is given, and also the reference to Ellis's perversion of the Homeric Myth, without, however, any critical examination of these assertions.

She proceeds, quoting the inner clause in inverted commas from the English text of *Mein Leben*, "At thirty-five Wagner resumed the study of Greek, to make up, he says, for the deficiencies in 'my boyhood's knowledge of the eternal elements of human culture

[1] See the quotation from Glasenapp and Ellis on p. 13.

[2] New York: Columbia University Press. 1919.

and the neglect of this field of learning due to the life I had been obliged to lead.'" There is not a word in the text about "resuming" the study of Greek as a language: a knowledge of the language is not necessary, though it would be a help, in studying Greek literature and antiquity.

P. C. Wilson gives one further extract from *My Life,* p. 415. "For the first time I now mastered Æschylus with real feeling and understanding. Droysen's eloquent commentaries in particular helped to bring before my imagination the intoxicating effect of the production of an Athenian tragedy, so that I could see the *Oresteia* with my mind's eye, as though it were actually being performed, and its effect upon me was indescribable. [Nothing, however, could equal the sublime emotion with which the *Agamemnon* trilogy inspired me, and] to the last word of the *Eumenides* I lived in an atmosphere so far removed from the present day that I have never since been able to reconcile myself with modern literature. My ideas about the whole significance of the drama and of the theater were, without a doubt, molded by these impressions. I worked my way through the other tragedians, and finally reached Aristophanes." He then speaks of reading in his garden. He continues, "My delight in the comedies of Aristophanes was boundless, when once his *Birds* had plunged me into the full torrent of the genius of this wanton favorite of the Graces, as he used to call himself with conscious daring. Side by side with this poet I read the principal dialogues of Plato, and from the

Symposium I gained such a deep insight into the wonderful beauty of Greek life that I felt myself more truly at home in ancient Athens than in any conditions which the modern world has to offer." (*My Life,* p. 415.)

Miss Wilson, herself a classical scholar, as her book shows, does something more than accept this. In quoting the passage she very significantly omits the words which I have inclosed within square brackets in order to call attention to them. Why did she omit them? For the very good reason that they give Wagner completely away as to his knowledge of Greek drama, and they demolish her thesis at the very outset.

Wagner said that while he was stirred by the *Oresteia* it was the *Agamemnon* TRILOGY that "inspired him with sublime emotion." The *Oresteia* and the *Agamemnon* TRILOGY which Wagner alluded to as two different groups of plays, are ONE AND THE SAME THING. As well say that *Twelfth Night* is one play and *What you Will,* another.

All this bombastic talk about the Greek drama vanishes into thin air when Wagner shows us that he did not know that the *Agamemnon* is the first part, and the *Eumenides* the third part, of the *Oresteia.*

But there is another oversight or suppression on Miss Wilson's part. Earlier, in *My Life,* p. 316, there is a passage which I have already quoted (p. 17), but it must be repeated here:

"As for the Greek and Roman classics, I had to content myself with standard German translations.

Indeed, on looking once more into my Homer—whom I secured in the original Greek—I soon recognized that I should be presuming on more leisure than my conductorship was likely to leave me, if I hoped to find time for regaining my lost knowledge of that language. Moreover I provided most thoroughly for a study of universal history, and to this end did not fail to equip myself with the most voluminous works."

Both quotations are referable to the period when Wagner was conductor at Dresden.

I have already quoted Miss Wilson as saying (p. 2), "At thirty-five, Wagner resumed the study of Greek," and have added my comment. In order that her thesis should have some backbone she starts with the assumption that Wagner actually did read in Greek all the authors mentioned. A little reflection ought to have led her to the conclusion that, apart from his day's work, even a ripe scholar would not have been able to get through a seventh of what Wagner says he read while in Dresden.

Miss Wilson shows a wide knowledge of the Greek dramatic poets and of the Wagnerian drama, but scholarship is a stern mistress and does not admit unsubstantiated assertions or conscious and deliberate omissions. As a thinker in music Wagner stands alone, but it was illconsidered to credit him with a knowledge which any schoolboy who investigates the facts must ridicule with the conclusion that he did not that which he said he did. As for Wagner's "voluminous works," let us hope that his "library"

was not like that of one other, a worshiper, too, the pages of whose favorite author (in twelve volumes) were uncut!

It is undeniable that in boyhood and early youth Wagner was living in an atmosphere in which matters Hellenic were discussed, and from what has already been said on p. 18 his acquisitive brain picked up odds and ends of information which, thanks to his unsystematic and undisciplined education, he misapplied. How much of this Hellenicizing tendency was in the air may be gathered from Uncle Adolf Wagner's German translation of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles (Ellis, i, 25) the reception of which appears to have been chilly. But in the preface the author seems to have contradicted himself by protesting against the Hellenic influence, which at the time was widespread. His words as given by Ellis are, "Art is a world-growth whose component parts are formed of various peoples; beneath the influence of light it springs from earth, it blossoms, bears its fruit, and fades; and thus it has its history like every other mortal thing, or rather every fallen thing divine."

There is his creed, compact, comprehensible. Would that Richard had compressed some of his many hundreds of pages into these few words! Then we should have had music—not musings without mind.

But Adolf Wagner had been challenged by a private performance of Apel's "Æschylean poem, the 'Polyidos.'" This bastard name, the name

of "infinite variety" bestowed upon Polueidos, referred to a personage who, according to Aristotle (Poetics, c. 16), conceived a situation in a play of his which is compared with a similar dénouement in the *Koephoroi*. But whether Apel's poem was a development of the fragment left by Polueidos or a play "written round" an author of whom little is known, the import to us in connection with Wagner is that the rivalry between his uncle and Apel may have had some part in attracting Richard's attention to an aspect of drama which was new to him.

How far he carried his interest at this time (1829, in his sixteenth year) he tells us himself. (*My Life*, p. 46.) "I took private lessons in Greek from a scholar, and read Sophocles with him. For a time I hoped this noble poet would again inspire me to get a real hold on the language, but the hope was vain." The room in which he worked overlooked a tanyard, the odor of which affected his nerves so strongly that he "became thoroughly disgusted both with Sophocles and Greek." . . . "All that I recollect about my school days in this connection is that I was attracted by the classical period of Greek history; Marathon, Salamis, and Thermopylæ composed the canon of all that interested me." Not much of a "thorough classical education" here.

The sole criticism of Wagner's discourses upon Greek that I have been able to discover is that of the young Austrian poet Johannes Nordmann who met him during the Dresden period.[1] Of Wagner,

[1] Glasenapp, ii, 176. Ellis, ii, 171.

he said, "He spoke of the Greek dramatists with an acumen one might seek in vain in many a professor. But what struck me most was the predilection he already displayed for German myth, his rapt enthusiasm for our old Heroic Lays. The hour I passed in listening to the master's stimulating talk was an intellectual feast indeed."

But this was not a contemporaneous account. It appeared forty years later, in 1886, three years after Wagner's death, when there was a tendency to estimate Wagner and everything concerning him, not as he actually was during a given period, but as he eventually came to be. Nordmann may not have been able to follow Wagner in his Hellenic discourse at the time, and his recollection may have been stimulated by what he subsequently heard about him. He seems to have turned more attentively to the remarks on German myth, where both were on safer ground.

It is by his silences that Wagner arouses suspicion. The passages quoted from *My Life* are scarcely in harmony with what we expect from one who had "a thorough classical education." When he intruded into the domain of Greek archæology he was more a trespasser than a welcome guest. In this as in everything else the world had to see things only as he saw them, not as they were, and are. This insistence stood in his light throughout his career, and the enjoyment which should have been his when the winds of time had tempered the rough edges and obliterated the scars, came too late. He missed so much by hitting too hard.

Wagner has been quoted (p. 268) as having said that he felt himself more truly at home in ancient Athens. Fortunately for us, the phrase, "spiritual home," had not yet been invented. But there is a reference to Athens which cannot be overlooked. After the first performance of *Lohengrin,* when the urgent question of "cuts" arose, Wagner wrote to Genast, the Weimar stage-manager, a letter of which the following passages are material. It is given in Ellis, iii, p. 59.

"These people who leave the theater after the second act of *Lohengrin* are neither fatigued by its length nor deafened by its noise; but, the better their inclinations, the more have they succumbed to the unwonted strain of having to digest a dramatic portrayal that does not address itself to the quarter or half, but to the whole man.... If you really wish to educate the public, before all you must educate it to strength, must drive the sloth and slackness from its philistine limbs, and guide it to seek at the theater, not distraction, but *concentration*.... For a performance of their trilogies the Athenians sat from midday [*sic*] into night, and quite certainly they were nothing more than human; but what they were, was, *active* even in their enjoyment."

The quotation is worthy of study as showing how untrustworthy Wagner was when dogmatizing. In Weimar, in the year 1835, there was published a work entitled *Das Attische Theater-Wesen,* by G. C. Schneider, and referred to by Grote in his *History of Greece* (viii, 122 *n.*), as a "learned and valuable

contribution." Wagner may never have heard of it, but it was at hand.

The season of the Festival of Dionysus at Athens, when the dramas were performed, was between the middle of March and the middle of April, just after the spring equinox, when the hours of daylight were gradually increasing and the air was mild enough for a long day out of doors. The mean temperature in Athens was about 60° during these weeks. About two o'clock in the morning, or even earlier, the audience started for the Theatre of Dionysus, crowding along the Street of the Tripods, where, and in the street leading to the theater, they were lined up in queues by the rod-bearers. The audience of between twenty-seven and thirty thousand was seated *just before dawn.* The wise citizen had provided himself with his basket of provisions and his cushion.[1]

The performance began at *daybreak* with choral competitions which were not always listened to with patience. The decisions of the judges aroused partisanship, and the theater often became a sea of wild men, shouting and gesticulating. There must have been many a Beckmesserish touch in the " cat-calls and discordant outcries of the gallery " mentioned by Plato, when the critics found fault with the musical settings of the chorus and the violation of rules, anticipating the procedure of the Mastersingers by two

[1] Some idea of the size of the theater may be gathered from its diameter at the topmost seats, which was 288 feet. The greatest *outside* diameter of the Albert Hall is 273 feet.

thousand years. Wagner truly but unconsciously said that "they were *active* in their enjoyment," when they pelted a second-rate flute-player with stones.

The trilogies were not spun out to an interminable length: the longest three plays of Æschylus, composing the *Oresteia,* together were shorter, and in shorter lines, than *Hamlet,* and only one in number of lines was longer than the first act of *Siegfried.* This act, *when sung,* would occupy nearly the same amount of time as the three plays constituting a trilogy. The three were followed by a fourth, a satyric drama, generally ribald in character, in which sometimes the personages in the three plays were burlesqued—"a combination of impudence and indecency—dignity and courteousness."

If Wagner had it in his mind to construct the *Ring* on the Greek plan, then *Das Rheingold, Die Walküre,* and *Siegfried* would have formed a trilogy, and, to be archæologically correct, *Götterdämmerung* should have been a screaming farce.

The "concentration" of which Wagner wrote so glibly was merely a phrase. The Greek dramatists were quite as apt as Wagner with longeurs, and during these—for there were no intervals—the audience had a bite at their cakes and garlic, their figs and olives—with the stones reserved as missiles in case of need—and now and then, as the place got warmer, a mouthful of the resinous wine. They faced due south: the actors facing north had not the sun in their eyes.

If the play was not to their liking they stopped

it and called for the next. No delays or intervals were possible, for sixteen plays had to be got through —that is, four groups, each consisting of three tragedies and a satyrical drama—while daylight lasted. This gives us some idea of their length. Between March 15 and April 15, from sunrise to sunset, there were twelve to thirteen hours, and with the sudden nightfall it was necessary to complete the day's program within that time. Each group, therefore, had to occupy only three hours.

For all his professed reading, Wagner failed to appreciate the quality of an Athenian audience. The enlightened among the spectators were in a minority, and constituted an aristocracy, with leisure (*scholē*) to cultivate their minds. In addition there were the priesthood and the votaries of diverse cults: ambassadors and distinguished visitors, but these were a mere sprinkling in an audience of 27,000. The greater mass were slaves, artisans and laborers, who were abroad for entertainment in the guise of a religious festival.[1] What they appreciated was the play, for they were ignorant even of their mythological legends. It would have been a hazardous affair if *Lohengrin* had had an audience of this kind.

[1] Horace was none too complimentary when describing one class of audience—

> Illecebris erat et grata novitate morandus
> spectator, functusque sacris et potus et exlex.
>
> *Ars Poetica*, 223.

Or, freely translated, "The audience was attracted by the delightful novelty of the thing, and the sacred rites were enjoyed as much by the tippler as by the jailbird."

As time went on and certain trilogies were revived, the audiences became more instructed, but what Wagner assumed to be the possession of the many, *hoi polloi,* was actually within the reach and comprehension only of the few,[1] *hoi oligoi,* and dialect had to be taken into account as a complication.

Having attempted to compress into a small space a very large subject, but mainly in order to test Wagner's statement, we will finally turn to P. C. Wilson's book already mentioned.

With her thesis to be demonstrated it was natural that she should have endeavored to find in Wagner's music-drama passages suggested by his studies in Greek. To pick out a few lines or an incident here and there and search for a parallel in a Greek tragedy is not a sound proceeding in scholarship. If Wagner had said that the Bible had been his daily food, it would have been as easy to collect similarities from it: or, again, from the Æneid.

It was special pleading for Miss Wilson to base her researches upon what was after all a pure assumption. To trace a connection between the *Dutchman* overture and four lines in one play and four in another is to put a strain upon common sense. Why not go further and trace the idea of the overture to the sea? Again, there are references to Wagner's long monologues—which when sung take three or four times

[1] The reader will find a wealth of detail, with copious references, in the two works on the Greek Drama by A. E. Haigh: *The Attic Theatre* (1889), and *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks* (1896), both published by the Clarendon Press. To these I am greatly indebted.

longer than when spoken. He needed no Greek to teach him there. They were German throughout.

It is just because the Greek drama is so protean that parallels can be found in any true poet who has searched the deep workings of the mind, and immersed himself in Greek scholarship.

APPENDIX B

THE PATERNITY OF WAGNER

IN his *Wagner as Man and Artist* [1914], p. 326, Ernest Newman with great critical acumen and impartial judgment analyzes the relationship between Geyer and Wagner's mother, Johanna. But there are points of interest yet to be settled, for in studies of eugenics, heredity, and the acquirement or transmission of special mental endowments and characteristics, it is unlikely that the personality of Wagner will be overlooked. It is in the light of scientific inquiry that the paternity of Wagner has been investigated.

Glasenapp (*English edition,* I, pp. 42, 43) gives the ages of Friedrich Wagner's wife and those of some of the children which enable us to fix the time when Geyer became an inmate of the house on the Brühl.

He says that Johanna, Wagner's mother, had just turned thirty. This would give the date of Geyer as an inmate as 1808, she having been born on September 19, 1778.

But he goes on to say that when Geyer took up his abode, Rosalie, born in 1803, was not ten years old, Julius was in his eighth year, Luise in her seventh. If these ages are correct the Geyer date must be 1812, which makes Johanna thirty-four and not thirty.

If they are incorrect, then Johanna must have mar-

ried when she was sixteen and had her first-born when she was seventeen.

But beside the date of her birth we have the date of her marriage, June 2, 1798, and her first-born, Albert, arrived on March 2, 1799.

Now, while dates of birth have their importance, what is infinitely more material in this investigation is the approximate date of what in the language of the law courts is called " opportunity."

The child immediately preceding Richard was Ottilie, born March 14, 1811. Friedrich was then forty years of age and Johanna twenty-eight.

Between the birth of Ottilie and the conception of Richard there was a gap of seventeen months *i.e.* from March 14, 1811, to the middle of August, 1812.

Geyer became a member of the household in 1812.

Friedrich Wagner died on November 22, 1813, when Richard had just completed his sixth month.

Geyer married the widow, Johanna, on August 14, or 28, 1814.

The offspring of this marriage, Cæcilie, was born on February 26, 1815. Thus we have facts established, namely, that Johanna's widowhood lasted just nine months, the period which, according to German law, had to elapse before re-marriage, but that six months after the death of her husband, if not earlier, she yielded to Geyer. Was this the first occasion? Inferences might be drawn from the date of Richard's first birthday, May 22, 1814.

We now take his own references. In his letters to Minna he speaks of Geyer by name as his father, and

in the index of the English edition of the *Letters* (1909) when he writes about restoring his father's grave, the reference is given under "Geyer."

In his correspondence with Cæcilie he speaks of "our father Geyer."

He was entered in the books of the Dresden Kreuzschule as "Wilhelm Richard Geyer, son of the deceased Court-player Geyer."

Too much importance, however, need not be attached to this matter of surname. It may have been a common enough practice in those days for step-children to take their mother's new name in order to prevent confusion, and as Geyer was the only "father" that Richard knew, it was natural for the child to think himself a Geyer and not a Wagner. At the age of six a child cannot be expected to grasp a nice distinction of this kind, far less to comprehend its import.

As for his dropping the Geyer and assuming or resuming the Wagner, it was in his interest to be known by the latter name, since it was gaining some publicity in musical and theatrical circles through the talents and professional engagements of his sisters.

Then we have the untrustworthy autobiography—*Mein Leben.* In the work already quoted, Ernest Newman says (p. 327), "The root of the legend is a notorious remark of Nietzsche's. That philosopher had seen one of the privately printed copies of the autobiography about 1870," and Nietzsche's statement was supposed to be based on what he had seen therein.

Newman's critical study was published in 1914, at a time when the Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence was not yet in print, or at any rate out of reach.[1] We are now in possession of Nietzsche's account, from which it is clear that it was not one of the privately printed copies that he saw, but *the actual manuscript itself of the opening pages,* the proofs of which he corrected.

The first meeting between Nietzsche and Wagner took place in November, 1868. At that time Wagner was living at Triebschen with Cosima von Bülow, without any attempt at concealment. It is probable that Nietzsche, a young man of twenty-five, whose "innocence" was jibed at many a time by Wagner (he speaks of the coarseness of Wagner's talk), if not quite ignorant of the true situation, may have shut his eyes. At any rate, he, the Professor of Classical Philology at Basle, was so fascinated by the composer of *Tristan,* twenty years his senior, that he became his devout worshiper to the extent that he was "used" by the couple as a kind of commission agent for their wants. He was something of a *cicisbeo,* but not in any derogatory sense. By Christmas, 1869, he was overwhelmed with orders to procure presents of books, antiques, dolls and a doll's house (from Paris), to recover a missing portrait, and to hold himself ready to carry out the multitudinous behests of the pair. By this time he was well broken in, as the Triebschen couple meant him to be.

[1] *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence:* edited by Elizabeth Fœrster-Nietzsche, London [1922].

This was an example of Wagner's utter indifference to the convenience of others. At this time the railway journey from Basle to Lucerne could not be performed at best under four and a half hours, and to refuse Wagner in any respect was an "indiscretion."

Nietzsche's present to Wagner at this Christmas was an enlarged copy of a photograph of Schopenhauer, in a carved frame, "displaying Wagner's coat of arms" [*sic!*]. We shall see about this presently.

A few days before this, on December 3, 1869, Wagner wrote to Nietzsche inclosing "a large package of valuable manuscript, namely, the opening chapters of the dictated copy of my autobiography . . . . I wish . . . to have about sixteen pages printed before Christmas. . . . The chief thing is that the manuscript shall be given to the printers exactly as it is. I have already gone through it, after a fashion, in getting it ready for our friend [Frau von Bülow] to make a copy for the King." [That is, for Ludwig II.] Then he speaks of making alterations in the proofs.

What is the connection between the "coat of arms" and the manuscript of the autobiography? It is simply this, that Nietzsche, having read the beginning of the manuscript, containing the words, "I am the son of Ludwig Geyer," thought to pay Wagner a compliment in "canting" heraldry, by having carved on the pictureframe a GEIER, a vulture, as crest, not coat of arms.

In a letter dated from Triebschen, January 16,

1870, Wagner, with that incorrigible habit of his of looking the gift horse in the mouth, entered into minute details about the vulture, which was to be shown in such a way that it should not be mistaken for an eagle, " on account of the associations." Germans set great store upon armorial bearings, but Wagner was not entitled to crest or arms.

In the same letter, further, there are instructions that TWELVE (in a line by itself and in capitals) copies of the autobiography were to be printed, which " twelve copies should possess genuine historical value." And they did, and still do!

Nietzsche was to put the manuscript in the hands of Bonfantini, an Italian printer, with whom there were difficulties as he did not understand German—a nice point, this—and Nietzsche was to correct the proofs. The first section of sixteen pages was to be ready as a Christmas present to " our friend."

Up to this, four people had access to the manuscript, Wagner, Nietzsche, Bonfantini, who could not read German, and the person to whom Wagner dictated his reminiscences. Was this Frau von Bülow? It was quite natural of Wagner to mention that he might add dates or footnotes to the proofs, and this conveys the impression that he did not regard the manuscript as a final document.

Is it open to us to infer that the Geyer paternity was at any time discussed with Nietzsche? He was the intermediary between Wagner and the printer for the earlier part of the " copy," but later on the manuscript was sent direct to the printer, because it was

deemed advisable not to let Nietzsche, who trod the path of virtue, know that his paragon had not followed exactly the same route. Or was it that Wagner, having given himself away over the Geyer matter, was on his guard lest Nietzsche should come across some of the people freely discussed in the autobiography, and make inquiries?

Apart from what appeared in the autobiography as it was published to the world forty years later, there is no getting over the fact that it was a *vulture* and not some musical device or "charge" that Nietzsche chose as Wagner's "crest," and that Wagner himself was anxious that there should be no mistaking it for anything else than a vulture, a Geier.

As far as facial resemblance is concerned, he was singularly like the rest of the family, but they were all by the same mother.

We next have such evidence as can be supplied by character. It is admittedly circumstantial, for there are gaps in the chain.

The child nearest to Richard was Cæcilie, the Johanna-Geyer child, younger than he by twenty-one months. The next was Ottilie, 2 years and two months older. In his early days he was most attached to Cæcilie, and later corresponded with her and her husband, Eduard Avenarius on the friendliest of terms. But in the *Family Letters* there is a hiatus of nearly four years, and the last two letters which precede this are to Avenarius, the first endorsed by him, "1854, 3 July," and the second dated by Wagner from Zurich, September 2, 1854. The first was a re-

quest for money: the second, evidently following a refusal, contained a rather half-hearted apology. The next letter to Cæcilie that we have is dated January 29, 1859, and in this he refers to " Father Geyer." Eleven years later, in thanking Cæcilie for " an incomparably precious Christmas present "—a collection of family letters—he speaks twice of " our father Geyer."

It must be kept in mind that Wagner never knew any father except Geyer, and he was deeply attached to his mother. He may have been uncertain as to his true parentage, although of course his father would have been registered as Friedrich, till through some Teutonically involved entanglement of law he may have had to look into family affairs and then made the discovery that his mother was intimate with Geyer before she married him. It is possible, therefore, that if he believed in the Geyer paternity, he accepted it since it reconciled him with his conscience and pallitated his own irregularities. He may have argued that they were inherited.

His conduct in many ways was that which is commonly—but not as yet scientifically—regarded as that of an only son. There was his general attitude towards life—his petulant childishness, his flaring up on the slightest provocation, intolerant in argument, and taking contradiction as a personal affront.

No more can be made of the matter until that firm grip in Wahnfried is relaxed, and until one or more generations have passed away. By then, if fresh and

unassailable evidence should come to light, it will not in the slightest degree affect his music. If by then psychology has not been transmuted into some other-ology, the question may be taken up, with fabulous revelations.

NOTE ON THE NAME GEIER

What was the origin of Geier as a surname? Ernest Newman (p. 334) cites the researches of Otto Bournot into the Geier family, which have "established the piquant facts that all the Geyers were of the evangelical faith."

At the same time there are points to be borne in mind in regard to German surnames, particularly one so unusual as that of *Geier*. A Decree of Napoleon of July 20, 1808, forced Jews to abandon, within certain limitations, their Hebraic surnames. Earlier, in 1787, in the Austrian Empire, in Bohemia, and in Prussia, orders were issued compelling them to adopt surnames other than Hebraic, but the choice was restricted to Biblical names. In the event of a refusal a surname was forced upon them, hence *Durst* (Thirst), *Hunger* (Hunger), etc.

In *Die Deutschen Personennamen* of Alfred Bähnisch (Leipzig, 1910) groups of surnames are given, of birds, of which *Geier* is one, quadrupeds, trees and inanimate objects—names assumed from the signs on the houses of their occupants.

There may have been anti-Semite edicts much earlier than the latter part of the eighteenth century, operating locally and not wide enough in their embrace to attract attention.

There is a tradition, which, however, I have not been able to trace, that in some proclamation or other the Jews were required to adopt as a surname the name of a bird, flower, tree, etc. Bähnisch instances in Jewish families the names of quadrupeds, such as lion, fox, stag, wolf. Geier may originally have been the nick-name of a Jew with a face (or character) like a vulture ; and assumed as a surname voluntarily, or through "use and wont," or under compulsion.

Year.	Wagner's Age.	Minna Planer's age.	Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1803				
1806				
1807				
1808				
1809				Sept. 5, Wilhelmine Planer, Wagner's first wife born.
1810		1		
1811		2		
1812		3		
1813		4		May 22, Wagner born at Leipzig. Nov. 22, his father died.
1814	1	5		Aug. 14 or 28, Wagner's mother married Ludwig Geyer.
1815	2	6		Feb. 26, Cæcilie Geyer born.
1816	3	7		March 16, Otto Wesendonck born.
1817	4	8		
1818	5	9		
1819	6	10		

Works.	Contemporary Events.
	Birth of Berlioz.
	Napoleon's victory over Prussians at Jena.
	Treaty of Tilsit; Goethe's *Faust;* Spontini's *Vestale;* Hegel's Philosophy.
	Berlin University founded.
	Birth of Darwin, Tennyson, Balfe, Chopin, Mendelssohn.
	Birth of S. S. Wesley, Schumann.
	Birth of Liszt, Thackeray.
	Birth of Dickens, Browning; Napoleon in Moscow.
	German War of Liberation; battle of Leipzig; birth of Verdi, G. Macfarren; death of Grétry; Görres' *Lohengrin.*
	Waterloo; Schubert's *Erlkönig.*
	Scott's *Waverley;* Rossini's *Il Barbiere;* Spohr's *Faust;* birth of Sterndale Bennett.
	Birth of Gade; death of Méhul.
	Birth of Gounod.
	Schopenhauer's *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung;* birth of Offenbach, Clara (Wieck) Schumann; Spontini's *Olympia.*

Year.	Wagner's Age.	Minna Planer's age.	Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1820	7	11		
1821	8	12		Sept. 30, Ludwig Geyer died.
1822	9	13		Entered the Kreuzschule, Dresden.
1823	10	14		
1824	11	15		
1825	12	16		
1826	13	17		About this time Wilhelmine Planer had a child, Natalie, passed off as a younger sister ; father unknown.
1827	14	18		Entered the Nicolaischule, Leipzig.
1828	15	19		Dec. 23, Mathilde Wesendonck, née Luckemeyer born.
1829	16	20		At the Thomasschule, Leipzig.
1830	17	21		At Leipzig University for a short time. Studied counterpoint under Weinlig.

Works.	Contemporary Events.
	Weber's *Preciosa ;* birth of Herbert Spencer.
	Weber's *Der Freischütz ;* death of Napoleon, Keats.
	Birth of César Franck, Raff ; death of Shelley ; Liszt's first appearance as pianist.
	Beethoven's *Choral Symphony ;* Weber's *Euryanthe.*
Wrote a tragedy "after the Greek style."	Birth of Kelvin, Pasteur, Smetana ; death of Byron.
	Boieldieu's *La Dame Blanche ;* Huxley born.
	Weber's *Oberon ;* death of Weber.
	Univ. of Munich founded.
	Death of Beethoven, Blake ; birth of Lister ; battle of Navarino.
	Birth of Rossetti, Ibsen ; death of Schubert ; Deinhardstein's Comedy, *Hans Sachs.*
	Rossini's *Tell ;* Mendelssohn's production of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion ;* Bellini's *Romeo ;* Chopin in Paris.
Overture in B flat performed under Dorn.	*Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz ; Auber's *Fra Diavolo ;* July Revolution in France ; Uprisings in Belgium, Poland and Italy ; the Reform Bill.

Year.	Wagner's Age.	Minna Planer's age.	Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1831	18	22		
1832	19	23		Visited Vienna and Prag.
1833	20	24		Chorus Master at Würzburg.
1834	21	25		Conductor at Magdeburg.
1835	22	26		
1836	23	27		Conductor at Königsberg. Nov. 24, marries Wilhelmine Planer.
1837	24	28		Conductor at Riga. Dec. 25, Cosima Liszt born.
1838	25	29	1	
1839	26	30	2	Leaves Riga for Paris, *via* Pillau, London and Boulogne, where he meets Meyerbeer.
1840	27	31	3	In Paris ; first meeting with Liszt.
1841	28	32	4	At Meudon.

Works.	Contemporary Events.
Opus 1, *Sonata* in B minor; *Polonaise* for 4 hands; Libretto of *Die Hochzeit*; *Concert Overture and Fugue*; *Overture* in D minor. *Symphony* in C.	Bellini's *La Sonnambula*; Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*; Hérold's *Zampa*; death of Hegel, Niebuhr.
Die Feen.	Bellini's *Norma*; death of Goethe, Clementi. Death of Hérold; birth of Brahms.
Die Feen finished; *Das Liebesverbot.*	Schumann founds *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*; birth of Borodin.
Columbus overture.	Donizetti's *Lucia*; Halévy's *La Juive*; death of Bellini; birth of Saint-Saëns.
Performance of *Das Liebesverbot*; *Rule, Britannia* Overture. Scenario of *Die Hohe Braut.*	Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*; Mendelssohn's *St. Paul.* Death of Constable; birth of Swinburne.
Rienzi begun; *The Dutchman* considered.	Berlioz' *Cellini*; Lortzing's *Czar and Zimmermann*; birth of Bizet.
Rienzi; Songs—*Die beiden Grenadiere, Dors, mon Enfant, Mignonne, Attente.*	Berlioz' *Romeo.*
Rienzi finished; *The Dutchman* begun; articles for *Gazette Musicale* (Paris), *Europa* and other German papers. Performance of *Columbus*, Paris; music of *The Dutchman.*	Lortzing's *Hans Sachs*; Donizetti's *La Favorita*; death of Paganini; birth of Tschaikowsky. Dvořák born.

Year.	Wagner's Age.	Minna Planer's age.	Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1842	**29**	33	5	April, leaves Paris for Dresden.
1843	**30**	34	6	Hofkapellmeister at Dresden till 1849.
1844	**31**	35	7	Oct. 15, Nietzsche born.
1845	**32**	36	8	Aug. 25, birth of Ludwig, afterwards King of Bavaria.
1846	**33**	37	9	
1847	**34**	38	10	
1848	**35**	39	11	Death of his mother ; involved in politics. May 19, Mathilde marries Otto Wesendonck.
1849	**36**	40	12	For his part in the Revolution banished from Saxony ; flees to Weimar, then to Zurich, to Paris, and back to Zurich.
1850	**37**	41	13	Goes to Paris, Cité de Provence, then to Zurich.

Works.	Contemporary Events.
Oct., first performance of *Rienzi* in Dresden.	Death of Cherubini ; birth of Sullivan.
Jan., first performance of *The Dutchman* in Dresden ; *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel* in Dresden ; Text of *Tannhäuser.*	Donizetti's *Don Pasquale ;* Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri ;* Balfe's *Bohemian Girl;* birth of Grieg.
At Weber's Grave, Dresden ; Music of *Tannhäuser.*	Berlioz' *Instrumentation ;* Verdi's *Ernani ;* birth of Rimsky-Korsakoff.
Text of *Lohengrin ;* Project of *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal.*	Schumann's *Piano* and *Organ Fugues.* V. Wallace's *Maritana.*
Oct., first performance of *Tannhäuser,* Dresden.	
Beethoven's *Choral Symphony.*	Mendelssohn's *Elijah ;* Berlioz' *Faust.*
Music of *Lohengrin.*	Flotow's *Martha ;* Liszt Kapellmeister at Weimar ; living with Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein ; death of Mendelssohn.
Lohengrin completed ; first steps towards *The Ring ;* text of *Siegfrieds Tod.*	Revolution in Paris ; risings in Berlin and Vienna ; Schumann's *Manfred* and *Faust.*
Organisation of German National Theatre ; *Art and Revolution.*	Dresden Revolution ; Nicolai's *Merry Wives ;* Meyerbeer's *Le Prophête ;* death of Chopin.
First performance of *Lohengrin* under Liszt at Weimar ; *Das Judenthum in der Musik ; Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft.*	Schumann's *Genoveva ;* death of Balzac.

Year.	Wagner's Age.	Minna Planer's age.	Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1851	**38**	42	14	
1852	**39**	43	15	Meets the Wesendoncks, Mathilde then in her 24th year.
1853	**40**	44	16	
1854	**41**	45	17	Schopenhauer's influence.
1855	**42**	46	18	In London, Conductor of Philharmonic Society's Concerts ; then Zurich.
1856	**43**	47	19	
1857	**44**	48	20	Living in Asyl, near Wesendonck's house. Cosima Liszt marries Hans von Bülow.
1858	**45**	49	21	Crisis with Mathilde Wesendonck. Aug., leaves Asyl ; to Paris and Venice.
1859	**46**	50	22	From Venice to Lucerne, then Paris.
1860	**47**	51	23	Wagner concerts in Paris and Brussels. Aug., amnestied, Saxony excepted.
1861	**48**	52	24	Cosima von Bülow's "moral crisis" ; in Paris, Weimar, Vienna and Paris ; final rupture with Minna.

TABLE—*continued*

Works.	Contemporary Events.
Oper und Drama ; Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde.	Coup d'État, Paris ; Schopenhauer's *Parerga und Paralipomena ;* Verdi's *Rigoletto ;* death of Spontini.
Über die Aufführung des Tannhäuser ; working at text of *The Ring.*	Birth of Vincent d'Indy.
Text of *The Ring* published privately ; music of *Rhinegold.*	Verdi's *Trovatore* and *Traviata.*
Rheingold finished ; *Walküre* begun ; project of *Tristan.*	Crimean War.
Scoring *Walküre* at 22 Portland Terrace, Regent's Park.	
Score of *Walküre* finished.	Death of Schumann.
Working at *Siegfried ;* text of *Tristan* finished; Prelude and Act I composed.	Death of Glinka.
Fünfe Gedichte by Frau Wesendonck ; Acts I and II of *Tristan* scored.	Cornelius' *Barber of Bagdad.*
Tristan completed.	Solferino ; Gounod's *Faust ;* Meyerbeer's *Dinorah ;* Darwin's *Origin of Species ;* death of Spohr.
Zukunftmusik ; Venusberg music for *Tannhäuser* in Paris.	Death of Schopenhauer.
Tannhäuser fiasco in Paris ; heard *Lohengrin* for the first time ; *Die Meistersinger* resumed.	Oct., preparations for Liszt's marriage to Countess Carolyne Wittgenstein suspended by order of the Vatican.

Year.	Wagner's Age.	Minna Planer's age.	Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1862	**49**	53	25	At Biebrich am Rhein. March, amnestied in Saxony.
1863	**50**	54	26	Concert tours in Russia ; crisis with Cosima von Bülow. Dec., at Pensing, near Vienna.
1864	**51**	55	27	Flight from Penzing on account of debt ; to Marienfeld, then Stuttgart ; summoned to Munich by Ludwig II, aged eighteen one-half ; Living with Cosima von Bülow.
1865	**52**	56	28	April, Isolde, daughter of Cosima born—paternity disputed. Dec., banished from Munich by proclamation on account of influence over Ludwig II.
1866	**53**	57	29	Jan., death of Minna Wagner ; at Triebschen (Lucerne) ; Cosima von Bülow leaves her husband and is living with Wagner.
1867	**54**		30	Feb., Eva, daughter of Cosima von Bülow and Wagner born ; von Bülow present at the christening.
1868	**55**		31	At Triebschen. Nov., meets Nietzsche for the first time.
1869	**56**		32	June, Siegfried born. Dec., sends first sheets of *Mein Leben* to Nietzsche to be printed ; Bayreuth chosen as the locality for the theater.

TABLE—*continued*

Works.	Contemporary Events.
Composition of *Die Meistersinger ;* Prelude performed in Leipzig ; *Tristan* in rehearsal in Vienna.	Liszt's *Elisabeth ;* birth of Debussy.
Tristan given seventy-seven rehearsals ; *The Ring* published as a "literary product."	Berlioz' *Les Troyens ;* death of Thackeray.
Huldigungsmarsch ; Über Staat und Religion.	Death of Meyerbeer ; Richard Strauss born.
June, first performance of *Tristan* under von Bülow at Munich ; scoring *Siegfried ;* scheme for Munich Music School and Opera ; outlines *Parsifal* at Ludwig's request.	April, Liszt receives minor orders and becomes an Abbé ; birth of Glazounov.
	Thomas's *Mignon ;* Seven Weeks' War ; Sadowa.
Full score of *Die Meistersinger* completed.	Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet.*
June, first performance of *Die Meistersinger* under von Bülow at Munich. Finishes Act II of *Siegfried.* Sept., first performance of *Rheingold* under Wüllner at Munich ; reissue of *Das Judenthum in der Musik* with additions ; *Über das Dirigiren.*	Boito's *Mefistofele ;* Brahms' *German Requiem ;* death of Rossini. Death of Berlioz.

Year.	Wagner's Age.		Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1870	**57**		33	July 18, von Bülow divorces Cosima. Aug. 25, Wagner marries Cosima.
1871	**58**		34	Publication of *Collected Writings* begun; first German Wagner Society founded. Dec., in Bayreuth.
1872	**59**		35	April, in Bayreuth at Hôtel Fantaisie. May 22, foundation stone of theater laid. Visits Liszt in Weimar after a long separation.
1873	**60**		36	May, building of Wahnfried begun.
1874	**61**		37	May, in residence in Wahnfried.
1875	**62**		38	
1876	**63**		39	
1877	**64**		40	
1878	**65**		41	
1879	**66**		42	
1880	**67**		43	In Italy.
1881	**68**		44	Nov., in Palermo.
1882	**69**		45	Sept., to Venice.

TABLE—*continued*

Works.	Contemporary Events.
Act I of *Götterdämmerung* completed. June, first performance of *Walküre* under Wüllner at Munich ; *Siegfried Idyll.* Oct., *Eine Kapitulation* written (published in 1873).	Franco-Prussian War ; death of Dickens and Balfe.
Kaisermarsch ; score of *Siegfried* finished ; *An das deutsche Heer von Paris. On the production of the Ring.* Act III of *Götterdämmerung* finished in sketch.	Verdi's *Aïda ;* Wilhelm I, Kaiser ; Third French Republic ; death of Auber. Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy ;* Brahms' *Triumphlied.*
Score of *Götterdämmerung* begun.	
Score of *Götterdämmerung* finished. *Albumblatt* in E flat ; concert giving in Budapest, Vienna, Berlin. Aug., first performance of *The Ring* at Bayreuth under Richter ; American *Centennial March.* *Parsifal* begun ; Wagner Festival, Albert Hall, London. *Parsifal ;* various *Prose Works.* Neumann's tour with *The Ring.* July, first performance of *Parsifal* under Levi at Bayreuth.	Death of Cornelius. Bizet's *Carmen ;* Rubinstein's *Demonio ;* death of Sterndale Bennett. Brahms' *First Symphony.* Saint-Saëns' *Samson and Delila.* Death of Offenbach. Death of Carlyle. Death of Darwin.

Year.	Wagner's Age.		Cosima Liszt's age.	Personal Events.
1883	**70**		46	Feb. 13, death at Venice.
1886				
1887				
1893				
1894				
1895				
1897				
1900				
1901				
1902				
1911				

	Contemporary Events.
	Dvořák's *Stabat Mater.*
	May 13, Ludwig II drowned. July 31, death of Liszt. Verdi's *Otello.* Verdi's *Falstaff.* Feb. 12, death of von Bülow. Death of Otto Wesendonck. Death of Brahms. Aug. 25, death of Nietzsche. Death of Verdi. Aug. 31, death of Mathilde. *Mein Leben* published.

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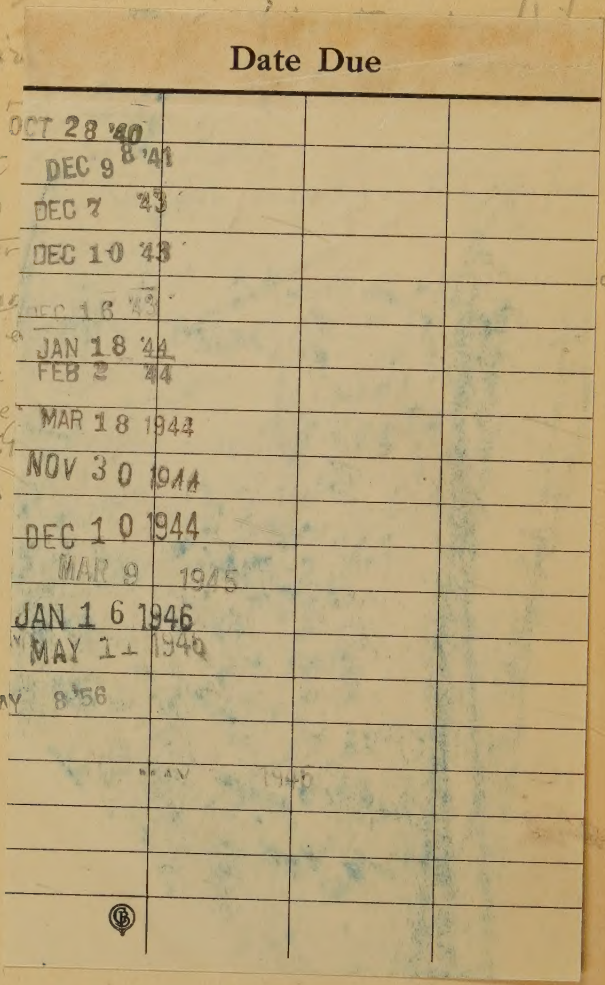
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